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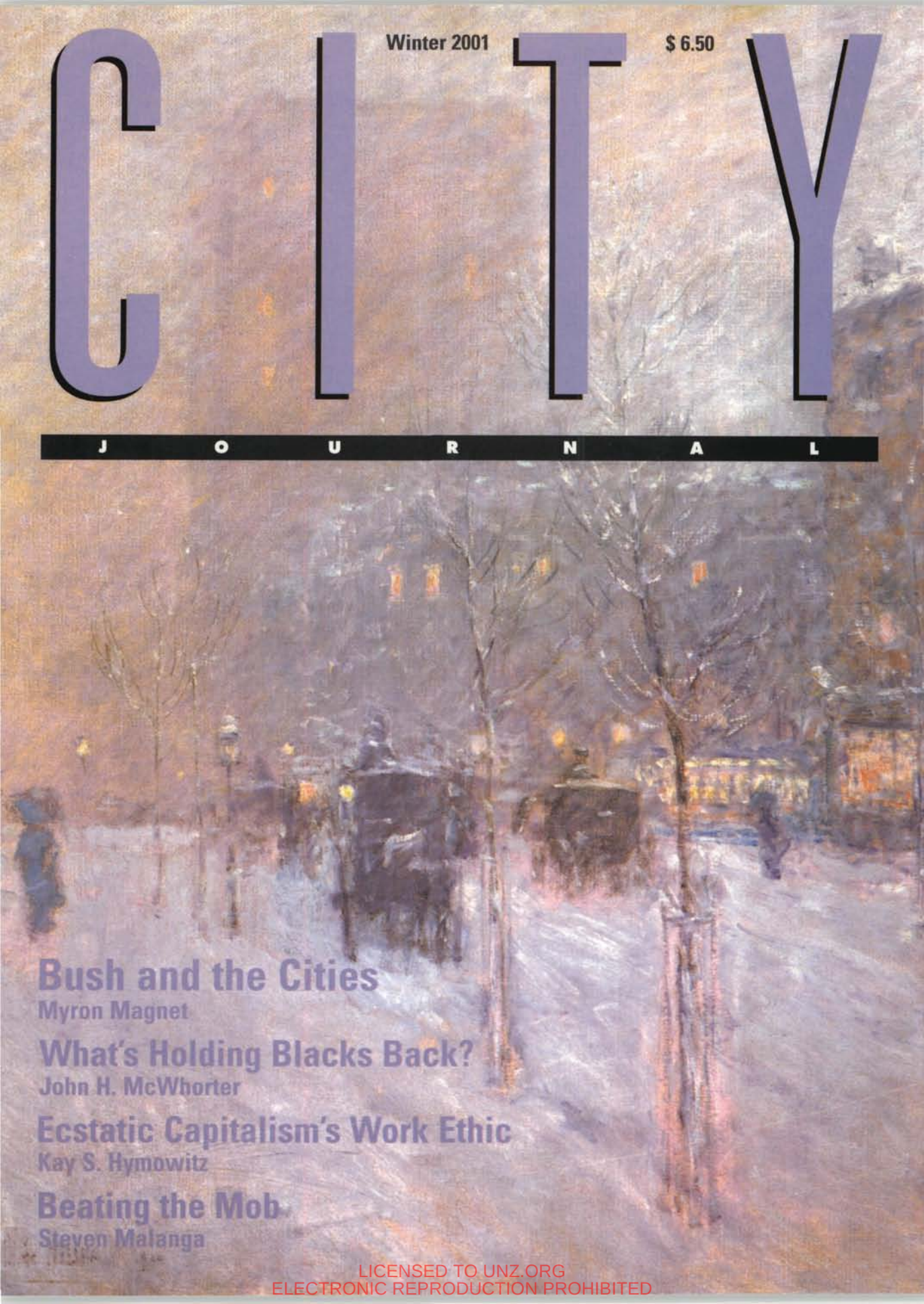

Bush and the Cities
Myron Magnet

What's Holding Blacks Back?
John H. McWhorter

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In Prospect

Consonant with the start of a new national administration and (by purists' reckonings) the dawn of a new millennium, the keynote of this issue of *City Journal* is optimism. It's an optimism more of the skeptical than the Panglossian "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds" variety, of course; and it rests on the proven truth that we are not the passive playthings of vast forces beyond our control but rather the active shapers of our destiny.

It's a fact of nature, pundits said, that American cities are ungovernable—until Rudy Giuliani and other smart mayors began to govern them. We have to live in careful balance with the Soviet Union, foreign-policy pundits said—until Ronald Reagan won the Cold War. Demographic changes mean that crime will explode, criminologists predicted—until enlightened policing cut crime dramatically. Elite culture is lost in political correctness, we conservatives lament—except that, as Heather Mac Donald elegantly shows in "The Met's Triumphant Democratic Elitism" (page 76), Philippe de Montebello, through sheer determination (and talent), has preserved the Metropolitan Museum as a temple of high culture and high scholarship—and New York's Number One tourist attraction. Human will is crucial, both in public matters and in individual lives.

Understanding this truth is half the battle, as Fred Siegel and Van Smith make clear in their absorbing report from Baltimore on page 64. For years, the mantra of Baltimore politics was: "Can't be done, don't even try." Little wonder that epidemic crime and economic decline ensued, driving some 16 percent of the population out of town during the nineties. The most important of new mayor Martin O'Malley's governing principles is that he *can* change things for the better, and in that spirit he has already started pushing Baltimore in the right direction.

You would think such an understanding is a no-brainer. But a meeting of would-be education reformers with two leading experts on public schools some years ago made clear why it is not. To one suggestion after another, the experts replied: "Oh no, can't be done. The union won't stand for it. . . . The State Legislature won't permit it. . . . We tried to do it 15 years back, and the governor stopped us." The result of all their considerable expertise and intelligence was passivity and paralysis—which they took to be political savvy and hard-nosed realism.

So you have to think boldly and then just *do* it. That's the message of our new contributing editor Steven Malanga's gripping saga of how New York City began to succeed in pushing the mob out of town (page 44). For years, prosecutors and pols had assumed that the mob was a given of city life, like pigeons. D.A. Morgenthau, prosecutor (later Mayor) Giuliani, and Governor Pataki had a different view, and today's cleaned-up garment district, garbage-carting industry, and Javits Convention Center show that once you decide to accomplish something, sooner or later, if you keep trying, you will figure out a way to get it done.

This optimistic idea is, as Norman Podhoretz explains in "America the Beautiful" on page 92, fundamental to the American spirit, which licenses everyone to pursue his own definition of happiness in his own way—a way that, in practice, will normally turn out to be the pursuit of material advancement. For that reason, Podhoretz says, elite intellectuals, contemptuous of materialism and mistakenly convinced of its inevitable opposition to the spiritual, can't see that the American idea has created one of the world's greatest civilizations. A similar can-do spirit today pervades whole segments of the population, as Kay S. Hymowitz shows in "Ecstatic Capitalism's Brave New Work Ethic" (page 32), and it has become a dynamo of creativity and prosperity—though, as Hymowitz cautions, the new economy's workamania comes with an inevitable set of costs, too.

The one place in the nation where that optimism is missing, as new contributing editor John H. McWhorter demonstrates in his profound "What's Holding Blacks Back?" (page 24) is among African-Americans. To be sure, McWhorter observes, blacks have made great strides—greater than they themselves admit; but what bars them from even more dramatic progress isn't racism but their own attitudes about American society and their proper identity within it. Educational excellence? Shapers of our own destiny? Can't be done, don't even try, is the orthodox African-American response. But all it would take is some optimism and effort, McWhorter rightly says, and the whole world would change. ■

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oundings

John V. Lindsay

The 107th mayor's legacy to New York

Former New York City mayor John V. Lindsay was an unforgettable, charismatic figure on Gotham's political stage. His passing late last year, at the age of 79, evoked in many New Yorkers nostalgic memories of the days when the debonair mayor strode confidently about the city in shirtsleeves, jacket slung casually, but with elegance, over his shoulder.

Though we mourn his passing, candor compels us to note that the patrician Lindsay's two terms as mayor of New York were a catastrophe from which the city, and even the nation, have still not entirely recovered. The pure embodiment of the elite orthodoxy of his day, Lindsay helped transform the debate on race in America with an agenda that provoked white flight from cities, welcomed militant black separatists into the mainstream, and introduced a vision of social welfare that encouraged dependency among the poor and nearly destroyed New York's economy.

ERICH HARTMANN/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Four-term congressman Lindsay catapulted into the limelight during the 1965 New York mayoral race, when his walking tours of Harlem and other black neighborhoods helped him capture 45 percent of the black vote and win the election—a remarkable achievement for a Republican from Manhattan's Silk-Stocking district. His neighborhood forays later helped New York avoid the ugly race riots that afflicted so many American cities during the sixties.

But during those tours, Lindsay made common cause with black militants like Sonny Carson, whose followers spouted viciously anti-white and anti-Semitic diatribes. The militants were restless for power, and Lindsay gave it to them. Appointed vice chairman of the Kerner Commission studying race riots in America, it was Lindsay who persuaded his colleagues to declare that racism was entirely to blame for the ghetto's problems. The commission's report helped push America away from an inclusive urban agenda that emphasized racial integration and toward a divisive, counterproductive one that stressed black power and community empowerment.

Under Lindsay, New York became a testing ground for that new agenda. The mayor pressed the Board of Education to experiment with community control of schools in Ocean Hill–Brownsville. The school district fell under the control of militants, who contemptuously fired mostly Jewish white teachers, lowered educational standards, and installed an ethnocentric curriculum.

Lindsay reshaped the notion of public assistance, previously considered a short-term safety net; anything more, in FDR's prophetic words, risked becoming "a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit." Lindsay funded seminars on how to recruit ever more welfare recipients, abandoned screening of applicants' eligibility, and set no time limits on benefits. Under his welfare commissioner, "Come and Get It" Mitchell Ginsberg, welfare rolls *doubled*, even though black unemployment was just 4 percent when Lindsay first took office.

To pay for this, Lindsay instituted New York's first-ever personal income tax, and he hiked corporate taxes. Otherwise, he showed little interest in the private sector. Unsurprisingly, New York's now tax-crushed economy crashed at the start of his second term, proceeding to lose a remarkable 610,000 jobs, or 16 percent of its workforce, over seven years, as corporations crowded the exits. The city teetered on bankruptcy, and Lindsay's overmatched successor, Abe Beame, had to go begging in Albany and Washington for a bailout.

A man of good intentions and impeccable personal integrity, Lindsay was so convinced of the moral justness of his cause that he dismissed anyone who questioned him (especially any outer-bor-

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ough white) as a bigot, and rushed ahead with his ideas. Their unintended consequences still haunt New York, and the nation.

—*Steven Malanga*

Safe Drivers

By taking swift precautions, the Giuliani administration saves livery cab drivers' lives.

Critics who have accused Mayor Rudy Giuliani and the NYPD of being insensitive toward minorities couldn't have talked to New York's tens of thousands of livery cab drivers, most of them minorities and immigrants.

Back at the start of last year, a rash of murders had the drivers terrified. Ten of their colleagues died violently during the first five months of 2000—six of them during five particularly bloody weeks in March and April. Livery drivers hadn't died at such a rate since the bleakest days of the Dinkins era, when 139 drivers were murdered between 1990 and 1993.

But where the Dinkins administration dithered without actually doing anything, the Giuliani administration acted swiftly—and effectively—to protect drivers. First, the mayor encouraged the drivers to install bulletproof partitions or video cameras in all livery cabs—and promised that the city would pick up half the cost. To date, over 10,000 of the 30,000 cabs boast new partitions; some 5,000 more now have new cameras.

Next, with the mayor's encouragement, the NYPD moved 300 officers to a new task force charged with stopping the attacks. The department also assigned a phalanx of detectives to investigate the murders, and it established safety zones in each borough, where drivers with suspicious passengers could go for police help. Says New York State Federation of Taxi Drivers chief Fernando Mateo: "By far, the Giuliani administration has done more in the last six months than any other administration has in their entire tenure."

The result of these various initiatives: since May, not one driver has been murdered—thanks to an "insensitive" mayor and police force.

—*Charles Upton Sahm*

Tort City

Personal injury suits are hurting Gotham, and there's nothing the city can do about them.

New York City's bill for claims arising out of personal injury lawsuits and other civil litigation is huge—and it gets bigger every year. For fiscal 1999, the city shelled out a jaw-dropping $418 million in claims, a 9 percent hike over 1998. During the last five years, the city has coughed up $1.69 *billion* in taxpayer money to settle claims. The tab for 1999 includes: $57 million paid for 2,800 sidewalk slips, $22 million for injuries on other city property, $23 million for lawsuits against the school system, and $118 for medical malpractice suits.

Even if you subtract the malpractice payments that New York must fork over thanks to its almost unique public hospital system, the remainder far exceeds what other major cities pay in civil liability claims. Los Angeles's tort bill was just $82.9 million last year, and nearly 60 percent was for settlements against the LAPD. Chicago's 1999 liability bill: a mere $10.2 million.

Gotham groans under its huge liability burden not because it's less safe than other cities, but because New York State, with one of the most plaintiff-friendly civil justice systems in the country, does little to protect its municipalities from frivolous lawsuits or outrageous judgments. Forty-two states, by contrast, put a cap on so-called pain and suffering awards in suits against municipalities. Illinois's Tort Immunity Act goes even further, restricting a wide range of suits against municipalities. Thanks in part to the act, litigants filed only 788 claims against Chicago in 1999, compared with an astonishing 26,632 claims against New York City.

Thirty-nine states, including California, have also abolished or curtailed "joint and several liability," which requires any defendant to pay the entire award in a case if other defendants can't come up with their share. This kind of liability hits major cities hard: where it's in place, personal injury lawyers always try to make cities co-defendants in tort suits, since their deep pockets make them always able to pay when other defendants can't.

Though New York City regularly proposes reforms to Albany, state legislators have refused to

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consider them. In recent years, the city has pressed to no avail for limits on lawyer fees and caps on pain and suffering awards. It has also unsuccessfully lobbied to have tort cases against it heard in the state Court of Claims, in which judges, who tend to be less sympathetic to plaintiffs than juries, render verdicts and make awards. Even though all lawsuits against *state* government go to the Court of Claims, Albany refuses to grant the city the same right.

Albany's noncooperation isn't surprising. Many key legislators are in the pockets of the state's trial lawyers, who vigorously oppose any reforms that would cut their fees. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver runs his law practice out of the offices of Schneider Kleinick Weitz Damashek & Shoot, a major personal injury firm with hundreds of cases pending against the city. On the other side of the aisle, Bronx state senator Guy Velella, chair of the Senate's Insurance Committee from 1993 to 1999, is a partner in Velella Velella & Basso, a firm that has brought numerous personal injury lawsuits against the city over the years—including several slip and fall cases successfully brought by members of Velella's family.

Instead of advancing reforms in Albany, the State Legislature is working to expand the rights of plaintiffs to sue and of lawyers to profit from tort cases. The Republican-controlled Senate recently voted with the Democratic Assembly majority for a bill lifting caps on lawyer fees in medical malpractice cases. Thankfully, Governor Pataki vetoed the legislation.

But Pataki will have to spend a lot more political capital if Gotham is ever to have meaningful tort reform. Meanwhile, New York taxpayers are the big losers.

—*Steven Malanga*

The Bishops Err on Crime

The U.S. Catholic Bishops' new statement on crime is part of the problem.

In November, the U.S. Catholic Bishops released a major report on the nation's crime problem, "Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice." Any public statement that the bishops make gets lots of attention, and this one garnered favorable notice from the *New York Times* and other major papers. But the document is deeply flawed in its understanding of why crime occurs and what policymakers should do about it.

The bishops begin by asserting that the national debate on crime has become too simplistic, ignoring the "complex" causes of crime: "extreme poverty, discrimination, and racism." To address those causes, the bishops recommend policies that ensure jobs, affordable housing, and ample health services for poor, largely minority, communities.

This kind of thinking sent America's crime rate rocketing upward in the wake of the sixties cultural revolution. To place the blame for crime on poverty and racism suggests that raping, murdering, and thieving are somehow understandable, even excusable, because society isn't perfectly just. It also devalues the achievement of the majority of poor minority kids, who struggle to live decent, law-abiding lives. By reburnishing this hoary argument, the bishops are simply encouraging criminality.

Second: the bishops decry the "astounding rate of incarceration" in America, pointing out that it's six to 12 times higher than that of other Western nations. They find the emergence of "supermax" prisons and harsh "zero tolerance" polices for nonviolent drug offenders profoundly troubling. They recommend slashing America's imprisonment rate through more rehab programs and community-based sentencing alternatives to prison, asserting that locking up so many malefactors doesn't improve public safety.

Unfortunately, criminologists have shown that putting more bad guys behind bars *has* made Americans more secure, especially those living in cities. Were the jails and prisons to open, flooding borderline neighborhoods with the minor offenders now in jail on various drug-related charges, things could go to ruin in a hurry—unless the community-based sentencing alternatives that the bishops recommend had a harsh backup: screw up, and it's back to the slammer for good. The bishops pay lip service to the idea of "broken windows" policing—the theory that, if law enforcement ignores low-level infractions like petty open-air drug deals, pretty soon the real bad guys get the idea that the social order has collapsed, emboldening them to

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commit more serious crimes; but in the end, they don't seem to get it.

Finally, and most disturbingly, the bishops contend that the nation doesn't sufficiently acknowledge that bad guys are human beings, too. Almost every time the bishops' statement mentions crime victims, it immediately mentions the criminal as deserving equal sympathy. "Both the most wounded victim and the most callous criminal retain their humanity," the bishops say, adding that "both victims and perpetrators of crime are children of God." This rhetorical strategy risks transforming the rapist and the murderer into victims morally indistinguishable from the raped and the murdered—which is to make moral judgment meaningless and thus squander the Catholic Church's most powerful incentive for moral behavior.

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Bishops were not always so mystified about how to deal with crime and disorder. Without going back to Saint Augustine, think only of New York's archbishop John Hughes, whose willingness to attack what he called the sinful behavior of the immigrant Irish in the second half of the nineteenth century was a huge spur to their uplift. Today's bishops, still drawing on the nonjudgmental antinomianism of the sixties, have traveled far from Hughes's robust, faith-filled morality.

—Brian C. Anderson

A Fair Day's Work?

The new UFT contract should make teachers earn their pay.

Late in the game during its recent contract negotiations with New York City, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) realized that if it were going to press for a whopping wage increase it had better come up with some data showing that its members were putting in a full day's work. Early in October, the union distributed a "Teacher Workday Survey" to its 80,000 members. Teachers had to say how long they "typically stay in school beyond the required 6 hrs. 20 min.," as well as how much time they put in at home grading papers or preparing lessons. The union needed this information, it claimed, because "some officials [i.e., Mayor Giuliani] have criticized teachers' so-called 'short' hours."

Sorry, but asking teachers how many hours they work probably isn't the most accurate way to measure teacher productivity. Somehow, I don't think that my son's social studies teacher last year at Robert Wagner Junior High School on Manhattan's East Side is likely to show up in such a survey.

By the middle of the school year, as far as I could tell, this teacher (let's call her Ms. M.) had worked exactly *zero* minutes beyond the official 6-hour-and-20-minute school day. (Of course, like all other junior high and high school teachers in the system, Ms. M. actually has to teach only five 43-minute periods—3 hours and 35 minutes—during the official day, and only has 180 work days per year.) As my son and several classmates reported, Ms. M. would arrive every morning just as the kids entered the building. She'd then be out the door seconds after the bell rang to end the school day. Ms. M. almost never commented on the kids' written work, she often used students to grade tests, and she relied almost exclusively on canned classroom assignments. She thus seemed to have little need to work at home.

Toward the end of the school year, my wife and I realized that Ms. M. hadn't covered the state-mandated American history curriculum for the eighth grade. I wrote to Ms. M., protesting her poor performance, and sent a copy to Wagner principal Elizabeth McCullough. Some back and forth followed about scheduling a conference to discuss my complaints. Since my wife teaches at a public school, we requested that the meeting take place after 3 PM, so that she could get there without missing any school time. Impossible, school officials

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told us: Ms. M. wasn't required to remain in school for one minute after 3 PM and was unwilling to do so. When I asked McCullough if she supported this truculence, she sighed. "There's nothing I can do," she said. "It's in the contract."

What's most troubling about this incident isn't what it reveals about the work habits of this one teacher, as disturbing as they are, but rather that the principal was absolutely right: it *is* in the contract. Not only can't schools require teachers to meet with parents after school, but an administrator's professional evaluation of teacher performance can't take productivity into account. Ms. M. knew that whether she worked one minute or 100 minutes beyond the 6-hour-and-20-minute school day, she'd get a salary increase based solely on another year of seniority.

HIROJI KUBOTA/MAGNUM PHOTOS

This doesn't mean that Ms. M. is the norm. Many teachers put in long hours. And many exceptional principals refuse just to throw up their hands at the contract. They find ways—even if it means breaking rules—to cajole or inspire their teachers to make that extra effort.

But you can't run 1,100 schools based on these kinds of extraordinary individuals. In calling for wages based on merit, not seniority, Mayor Giuliani is doing nothing more radical than encouraging time-serving teachers like Ms. M. to work harder. At a time when New Yorkers seem agreed on raising expectations for students, how about expectations for teachers?

—*Sol Stern*

It's Just Sex

Oral sex is increasing among 12- and 13-year-olds, and advocates propose more failed sex-ed solutions.

Two articles in December's *Family Planning Perspectives*—both extensively reported in the *New York Times* and *USA Today*—might make you think that the nation's teens have just started to indulge in new, dangerous sexual practices that require a forceful response from public health officials. But look closer, and you'll see that the articles are less about health than politics.

Unquestionably, the sexual behavior the two articles depict is profoundly disturbing. One in ten boys aged 15 through 19, for example, has had anal sex with girls. Far more commonplace is oral sex, with teens now viewing it as something, like kissing, that you might do with someone you don't care about much. Many virgins, viewing oral sex as "not really sex," think they're remaining abstinent when they do it. So pervasive among teens has oral sex become, experts warn, that oral herpes and pharyngeal gonorrhea are on the rise. Most troubling is the growing acceptance of this "body-part sex" as early as the seventh grade. Some 12- and 13-year-old girls, it seems, consider fellatio the necessary price of hanging on to a cool boyfriend or looking sophisticated to friends; and, they reason, it removes some of the pressure to go all the way.

Yet neither article tells us much we don't already know. One study, based on data from as far back as 1988 and 1995, shows that the percentage of boys having intercourse or receiving oral sex, while high, has barely changed during those seven years. The second, more timely, study, based on interviews with health professionals about reports of rising oral sex among adolescents, found no consensus: some believe there's more oral sex; some think kids just talk about it more. The one recent behavior shift that is clear is the increase in younger teens practicing oral sex, a development reported in 19 newspaper stories in the past 18 months.

So if there's nothing really new here, why the fuss? The answer reveals itself in one report's title, "Oral Sex Among Adolescents: Is It Sex or Is It Abstinence?" With congressional funding for abstinence-only sex education about to reach its five-year limit, a regrouped public health establishment is here to say: it doesn't work. "What concerns me

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is what kids don't know. They're not protecting themselves," as Linda Alexander of the American Social Health Association told the *Times*. The clear implication: to protect kids, educators need to get into the specifics of oral and anal sex and teach kids how to use condoms and dental dams. Sound familiar?

The critics' recommended return to more "enlightened" sex ed isn't a solution; it's a proximate cause of the problem. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, the main reason kids cite for avoiding intercourse is fear of pregnancy and STDs. Kids have decided, it appears, that oral sex is a safer alternative. In other words, it is our almost exclusive focus on "risk reduction" and "negative health outcomes" that has helped to mainstream teen oral sex. But if this dehumanized, soulless, loveless, and morally vacuous language is all adults have to offer, is it any surprise that middle schoolers see no problem with body-part sex?

—*Kay S. Hymowitz*

Silicon Alley: Still Flourishing

New York's tech district is far broader than slumping e-tailers.

The dot.com stock meltdown that began last spring and has yet to run its course has cost investors billions and led many formerly high-flying Internet firms to lay off workers. But New York's digital economy is still flourishing. In the third quarter of 2000, venture capitalists pumped an impressive $1.07 billion into Silicon Alley, only slightly off the $1.09 billion they invested in the second quarter.

New York's digital economy is doing so well because it's far broader in scope than the slumping e-tailers that tend to get most of the media attention. Silicon Alley boasts scores of smart companies working to improve the Internet's infrastructure by allowing wireless access to it and improving the software on which it runs. Other successful Silicon Alley firms create tools essential to increasing the online productivity of business users. These kinds of companies continue to find financing and grow strongly.

The biggest single chunk of financing in New York last summer ($122 million), for example, went to Broadview Networks, a Manhattan-based independent telecom company that provides Internet access and builds networks and hosts websites for small and midsize businesses. It'll use the money to expand into new East Coast markets. Next biggest: Sphera Optical Networks, a Manhattan-based builder and operator of high-speed networks in big cities that received $70 million to open new markets.

Another sign of economic health: the city's tech community gobbled up 863,000 square feet of Manhattan office space over the summer. Though that's slightly off the huge numbers put up during the first six months of 2000, it still placed the industry a solid second—only Wall Street beat it out—as the biggest acquirer of new office space. Two years ago, tech companies barely made the top ten.

True, the city's new economy is unlikely to keep up its current torrid growth tempo. From 1995 through 1999, Silicon Alley mushroomed from 27,000 to nearly 140,000 jobs. Billions of dollars in stock-market financing and venture-capital investments fueled much of the job creation. Now, with IPO money drying up—not just in New York but everywhere—firms will trim expansion plans. Wall Street firms have spent a staggering $57 billion on technology since 1997, driving growth also. But with profits stalling across corporate America, and especially on Wall Street, firms probably will hold the line, or even reduce tech spending, at least for a while.

But though the unprecedented growth rates of the last few years will in time give way to a more predictable business cycle, the new data show that anything like dot.com depression isn't on the horizon.

—*Steven Malanga*

Philadelphia's Blackboard Jungle

When regulations keep teachers from disciplining, students run wild.

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives' recent report on violence in Philadelphia's public schools, based on hundreds of interviews with parents, teachers, and school officials, reads like a lost canto of Dante's *Inferno*. Gropings, kickings, stompings, tauntings,

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student-set fires—on and on it depressingly goes. It's equal-opportunity brutality: victims include everyone from third-graders to high school seniors, teachers to vice principals, even school safety officers.

Almost as shocking as the violence itself is the feckless response of school officials. Example: two thugs ram a classmate into a closed school door, knocking him unconscious. Did the school expel the baddies, or even suspend them? Nope: the dean of students ordered the perpetrators and their innocent victim to participate in mediation, as if there were no difference between them—a "punishment" made even more ludicrous when the malefactors didn't bother to show up.

For the dean to crack down with any real force would require heroic effort. Thanks to a bewildering accumulation of federal, state, and district regulations, a suspended student usually can return to class after just three to five days. Even worse, expelling a student to one of the district's "alternative" schools for miscreants takes 20 separate steps, including filling out 26 documents and sending them to 13 people. Miss a deadline, fail to fill out a form just right, and the whole process begins all over again—while the attacker remains in class. Expelling a student permanently is next to impossible. Some principals just try to transfer the worst cases to other schools, without alerting the new school to the transfer's bad habits—a poor solution, but arguably better than the more common Philly alternative of transferring the victim and letting the punk stay.

The report also found massive underreporting of violent incidents, as teachers, often under orders from superiors, keep mum. A teacher and a dean at Olney High School claimed that the school had 77 fires in 1998–99; the district officially reported only two fires. Pittsburgh, with a student population of 50,000, reported 4,020 assaults on students in 1998–99; Philadelphia, with 210,000 students, reported only 859 assaults. Nobody would claim that Philadelphia's schools are that much safer than Pittsburgh's.

The report rightly recommends easing the regulations that make it hard for principals and teachers to remove troublemakers and establish a safe and orderly classroom. Particularly egregious, the report points out, are the special-education rules that effectively forbid educators to suspend or expel the "emotionally disturbed" kids we once just would have called "antisocial." These regulations supposedly protect the rights of misbehaving students. But with teachers complaining that they spend 95 percent of their time disciplining the 5 percent of students who are responsible for most of the violence, perhaps it's time to question what we mean by rights.

—Kay S. Hymowitz

C*** Crazy

Wesleyan University's student organizations are a far cry from the glee clubs and debate societies of yore.

Remember Wesleyan University? That's the elite liberal-arts college in Middletown, Connecticut, where in 1999 students could take a course called "Pornography: Writing of Prostitutes." Taught by Professor Hope Weissman, this class included *Hustler* magazine and the Marquis de Sade on its reading list and delved, according to the official class description, into "the implication of pornography in so-called perverse practices such as voyeurism, bestiality, sadism, and masochism." "So-called" is a nice touch; what would Professor Weissman call such practices? The course also required that students create their own pornography. "I don't put any constraints on it," Professor Weissman said. One student, freshman Abbie Boggs, shot photographs that "included oral sex with her ex-boyfriend."

Wesleyan no longer offers the porn course. But parents shelling out the $34,690 per annum that Wesleyan currently charges may wish to ponder other elements of student life at "the Independent Ivy," as the university likes to call itself. Most readers will have fond memories of the student organizations they joined in their college years: a political union, perhaps, or a glee club or dramatic society. At Wesleyan, though, students can also belong to a club devoted to—how to put it? Think of a four-letter vulgarism for the female genitalia beginning with "c." Wesleyan has a club of that name, which, as *The Wesleyan Argus* reported, recently sponsored its first-ever "C*** Celebration Day." Students could stop by the Campus Center to pick up "health and pleasure pamphlets," buy "vagina-friendly pins," and admire the "pro-c*** chalkings across campus."

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There's more: club members "placed mirrors and diagrams in women's bathrooms to help female students learn more about their own anatomy." The club also screened a film "geared toward teaching women about self-love and masturbation." The *Argus* reporter seemed surprised and gratified that this feminist event appealed to the opposite sex: "The audience for the film, many of whom were men, almost filled Shanklin 107." Very broad-minded of the men, don't you think? Says one C*** Club member, Julia Marcus '03: "It's amazing to hear that some people have never talked about this before. I've become closer to my parents and can now say 'vagina' to them." How proud her parents must be!

BRUCE DAVIDSON/MAGNUM PHOTOS

C*** Club president Cara Herbitter '03 noted that the celebration's purpose was "to educate women, demystify the c*** and move away from shame." I think she and her friends are likely to succeed—at least on the latter two counts. Whether that's cause for joy is another matter. In another context, the nineteenth-century writer Walter Bagehot warned about letting "daylight in upon magic." Sooner or later it will dawn on Ms. Herbitter that in moving "away from shame" she has not become liberated but only shameless. At $34,690 a year, it's an expensive lesson.

—Roger Kimball

Don't Junk Homework

The new anti-homework crusade deserves an F.

To most of us, the idea of students toiling over homework at the kitchen table seems as American as apple pie. But educational faddists are pushing hard to reduce or even eliminate homework from grammar and secondary schools.

In a recent op-ed, John Buell, co-author with Etta Kralovec of an influential new book, *The End of Homework*, says that when kids hit the books after school, what's lost is the "virtue of free time, which plays a key role in fostering creativity, independence, and emotional development." Thanks to tough new academic standards, he argues, educators are "ratcheting up" homework, stressing everybody out. Time to chill out.

Trendy educators agree. A superintendent of a Piscataway, New Jersey, school district, for example, has sharply limited the amount of homework that teachers can assign. And a sympathetic liberal press—including the *New York Times*—has echoed the anti-homework position, casting itself as a Dickensian crusader against child labor.

In fact, the "ratcheting up" of homework that Buell laments is mostly a myth. Since 1981, a University of Michigan study notes, the amount of homework assigned to kids aged nine to 11 has only climbed from 2.75 to 3.5 hours a week—from 33 to 42 minutes a night.

Moreover, restricting or doing away with homework is unlikely to produce the bursts of creativity and independence that Buell, a former editor of *The Progressive*, envisions. The great devourer of kids' time today is television. Children watch an average of 2.75 hours of TV every weeknight, nearly four times what they spend on homework. Less homework may just mean more boob tube.

We know that homework works. Detailed studies over 15 years by Harris Cooper, a University of Missouri professor, show that it boosts academic performance, particularly in middle and high school students. It also teaches important lessons that kids don't learn in class, like budgeting time or how to study without a teacher looking over your shoulder, says education scholar Chester Finn.

Doubtless some teachers assign homework improperly, using it to accomplish work they should have done in class. But these are problems that smart principals should handle on a case-by-case basis without rejecting homework outright. Let's not allow the latest educational folly to produce sweeping changes that we'll all soon regret.

—Steven Malanga

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Solving President Bush's Urban Problem

Myron Magnet

RICHARD B. LEVINE (2)

The right to be safe in the streets is the most basic civil right.

Two years ago, *City Journal* predicted that the 2000 presidential election would be about culture not economics. Were we ever right. You can see part of the evidence in the exit polls, which show that regular churchgoers and married parents with children voted for Bush, while singles, the privileged rich, and those with advanced degrees crowded into the polling places for Gore. You can see it in the rancor that both parties displayed during the heart-stoppingly close election and the long count that followed. But you can see it even more clearly in the extraordinary geographical distribution of the vote: the urban elites and blacks went for Gore; the rest of the country, with the traditional values of the countryside, voted for Bush.

How should George W. Bush respond to this division, even polarization? Some Republican political analysts shrug their shoulders and observe that the exurban areas are growing faster than the urban ones, so who cares about the cities and their immediate suburbs? But given the excruciating closeness of this election, it makes more political sense—as well as policy sense—for Bush and the Republicans to try hard to pick up some urban votes. And the new president can do that by putting into effect the compassionate conservatism that he sounded as a keynote at the beginning of his campaign, muted during the race's final months, and reinvoked in his victory speech after Al Gore's concession.

Since Bush is a true believer in compassionate conservatism, he's likely to do just that. And it will benefit not just his party but, even more powerfully, the cities themselves.

The new president's compassionate conservatism can help cities —and woo urban voters.

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Compassionate conservatives welcome immigrants and admire their enterprise.

Compassionate conservatism is above all an urban agenda. At its core is concern for the poor (who are concentrated in the cities) and an explicit belief that government has a responsibility for poor Americans. This is not a traditional Republican preoccupation. From Richard Nixon on down, the policy of Republican presidents toward the poor, especially the minority poor, has been, in Senator Moynihan's indelible phrase, benign neglect. Presidents Reagan and Bush similarly gave scant attention to poverty and urban issues. But in the 1990s, innovative big-city Republican mayors and urban-state governors have made solving these problems a top priority. Compassionate conservatism really is the effort to make these solutions central to national politics.

If compassionate conservatism breaks out of the traditional Republican mold, it utterly rejects the liberal conventional wisdom about uplifting the poor that has reigned for over a generation. Compassionate conservatism, waving away the claim that liberal nostrums are the only possible expression of "compassion" for the poor, charges that liberal prescriptions, good intentions notwithstanding, have not only failed but have in fact made the lot of the poor worse over the last 35 years. Why else, after decades of growing opportunity, are the worst-off more mired in dependency, illegitimacy, drug use, school failure, and crime than they were when the experiment began? How can this be, after decades of vigorous new job creation that has seamlessly integrated millions of low-skill immigrants into the mainstream economy, and after civil rights acts and a real cultural change have together opened the society to minorities as never before? A compassion whose main success is to make the self-styled compassionate feel good about their superior virtue is of limited value.

So compassionate conservatism derails what for a long time had been the Democratic Party's greatest rhetorical advantage, its claim of a monopoly on caring about the worst-off. It's a direct challenge to the Democrats, because it says, okay, you've made the poor the center of your politics for half a century at least, saying that the condition of the poor is a society's moral touchstone. And fine, we've adopted all your nostrums for how to fix the plight of the poor—lavish welfare benefits, lenient crime policies, massive government support for illegitimacy, self-esteem-centered educational policies—the lot. We did the experiment. And now the results are in. Here at the start of a new millennium, we can see that your solutions really didn't work, because we have an underclass, a group of people who are not only poor but who are

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mired in poverty for their whole lives, for generation after generation, no matter whether the economy goes up or goes down.

This appeal is likely to resonate with at least some urban and suburban white middle-class voters, whose sense of moral worth rests on their social conscience, their concern and compassion for the excluded and downtrodden. For years, only Democrats have addressed those feelings; Republicans have mentioned the poor chiefly to excoriate welfare queens. Compassionate conservatism makes the same appeal that Democrats have made so successfully, an appeal that, as compassionate conservatives formulate it, is the more powerful because it is true. And many Democrats, seeing the all-too-plain failure of liberal welfarism, can assent to that truth.

Making the case to black voters is a tougher sell. Because a fifth of working blacks work for government, while a large proportion of the remainder work for government-supported social service providers, and many non-working black voters are welfare-dependent, many blacks, perhaps even a majority, have an economic interest in preserving big government, including the vast machinery of today's social service and welfare industries. What's more, the Gore campaign, in concert with black leaders, demonized Republicans in the eyes of many blacks—reanimating the extremist spirit that President Clinton tried to exorcise eight years ago, when he publicly rejected the black racism of rapper Sister Souljah. That's why blacks voted for Bush in half the proportion that they voted for Bob Dole four years ago.

Here again the power of compassionate conservatism's message is its truth, augmented by the deep sincerity of George W. Bush's concern for blacks and his belief that they can succeed in the American mainstream—without depending on destructive racial quotas—and rise to the heights to which he has elevated Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice. Certainly the resentful and paranoia-filled message that such black spokesmen as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton have retailed can only lead blacks to a dead end, especially since not even the Democratic Party can embrace such extremism for long. Over time, compassionate conservatism's optimistic message will win some black adherents—though when New York City minority schoolchildren assure their teacher that George W. Bush is a card-carrying member of the Ku Klux Klan, that process will take time.

Compassionate conservatism rejects all the liberal nostrums and offers a new way of thinking about the poor. These nostrums don't work because they are based on a psychological error that shows no understanding of the human heart. Telling the poor that they are mere passive victims, whether of racism or of vast economic forces, not only is false but is also psychologically destructive, paralyzing the poor with thoughts of their own helplessness and inadequacy. To succeed in life, we all need to have a certain self-confidence and optimism that keep us going when we hit obstacles and disappointments, as everyone does. Think of how destructive of confidence it has to be to tell the poor that, no matter how much they try, the forces aligned against them are just too strong for them to overcome. And telling the poor that the state can relieve them of personal responsibility and promote their happiness while they remain just passive recipients has the same effect. It treats them as if they are not the protagonists of their own lives, not moral agents with the same capacity for self-direction as the rest of us. The poor need the larger society's moral support; they need to hear the message of personal responsibility and self-reliance, the optimistic assurance that if they try—as they must—they will make it. They need to know, too, that they can't blame "the system" for their own wrongdoing.

Guided by such an understanding, state and local conservatives have hammered out effective new ways of helping the poor. Workfare, which began as an experiment by Governors Thompson of Wisconsin and Engler of Michigan, long before Bill Clinton signed the 1996 welfare reform act after twice vetoing it, is the most visible of these. Thompson and Engler didn't see their main goal as saving money. The problem with welfare, they believed, is not that it costs so much but that, instead of helping needy mothers raise sturdy children who go on to succeed in life, it perpetuates weak families, stuck in dependency for generations. Instead of promoting the welfare of children, all too often it results in children who are neglected or, worse, who end up beaten or burned or killed by the welfare recipient's new boyfriend. As a way of life—which is what it became—welfare

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degraded rather than uplifted too many of its supposed beneficiaries, children and adults alike.

Work, by contrast, by making an individual responsible for herself and her family, provides a road to self-respect and equal citizenship. So far, now that the welfare rolls have been cut by 50 percent across the nation, former welfare recipients pushed out into the workforce, at however low a level, have told reporters that they are indeed finding it uplifting. To take just one example out of legions, former welfare recipients in New Haven spoke to *City Journal*'s Kay S. Hymowitz of welfare reform's good effects not just on them but—more important, they felt—on their teenage daughters, who, facing the knowledge that they can't go on welfare and will have to work to support themselves, have started to want better than minimum-wage careers and have started to realize that they have every right to dream the same dreams for their future as mainstream American kids.

And certainly the prediction that welfare reform would produce millions of mothers and children starving on the streets seems ludicrous in light of the reality. Believe it or not, there were even more dire predictions than that. Senator Moynihan, who has proved the least reliable of welfare reform's prophets, spoke of how millions of kids "would be put to the sword" if welfare reform became law. (What does this say about the senator's opinion of the hearts of welfare's clientele? one wonders.) In fact, child abuse and neglect not only didn't rise; it fell over 12 percent between 1996, when welfare reform took effect, and 1998.

One can only speculate as to the cause, but one guess is that, as welfare recipients got jobs and adjusted to the requirements of work, the discipline of the work ethic—which really is an ethic—improved all aspects of their character. After all, the Victorian and Edwardian formulators of the work ethic understood that it is work that gives you a sense of your own powers and abilities; it is work that gives you self-esteem and self-confidence. So part of the problem of the underclass is that becoming merely the passive recipients of benefits gives them a kind of ghostly existence in their own eyes. Marx talked about alienated labor; there's nothing more alienating than welfare. *City Journal*'s Theodore Dalrymple has written of the thoroughgoing nihilism of this class: their sense that life has no meaningful shape but is only one damn thing after another. And their policy-induced disengagement from life is surely one source of their nihilism—which unfortunately so often gets expressed in violence.

So work is key, and President Bush will need to resist inevitable attempts to derail welfare reform, particularly in the event of an economic downturn. But for compassionate conservatism, work is only part of the answer. Workfare doesn't solve welfare's biggest problem: that with one hand it enables the creation of families in which children fare poorly, while with the other it falsely pretends to secure the welfare of those children by dispensing money. Compassionate conservatism offers two solutions.

First: try to stop single women, often too young and unprepared for motherhood, from having babies in the first place by restigmatizing illegitimacy. The mountain of research conclusively showing how badly children without fathers fare—as measured by school failure, divorce, criminality, mental illness, even suicide—is ample reason to show disapproval of women who put their babies at such risk. Recognizing that illegitimacy is perhaps the nation's Number One social problem, George W. Bush has repeatedly preached abstinence from sex until marriage (though, regrettably, his campaign muddied this message by speaking of the heroism of single moms), and even in anything-goes New York, Rudy Giuliani has repeatedly warned against illegitimacy's dangers.

The findings of the psychologists and social scientists about single parenthood shouldn't surprise us. After all, the family is the building block of the commonwealth, the most basic of Burke's "little platoons" of civil society, and a strong society needs strong families to pass down the store of social capital we inherit from the past and to build citizens with the strong consciences needed for self-government. The left has tried to substitute the state for civil society in many departments of life, but nowhere more mistakenly than in thinking that the state can be a substitute for fathers—that it can literally, not just figuratively, be a father to its people.

Politically, this is the thorniest part of compassionate conservatism, since the non-poor rightly recognize such statements as a call for across-the-board sexual responsibility that will circumscribe *their* sexual behavior, too—which, as the ho-hum response to the Clinton sex scandal shows, as does the passion with which so many middle-class voters support abor-

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tion, they resist. After all, the reason we ended up with an epidemic of illegitimacy is not because welfare provided an incentive for poor unmarried women to have children out of wedlock, as Charles Murray argued almost two decades ago. Welfare for families with dependent children existed in America since the Depression, but the illegitimacy explosion only began in the mid-1960s. It happened because, as part and parcel of the sexual revolution, the American elites led the society in rejecting most of the existing sexual stigmas, which they saw as obstacles to the sexual liberation they sought.

As the elites began to swing, they could hardly turn to the poor and say, sorry, fellas, this is just for us; *you* have to cleave to the straight and narrow. What kept poor people from getting pregnant out of wedlock before then was fear of ostracism by the ladies on the front porch next door. But all that disappeared in the sixties; it was dead and buried by the time the Summer of Love was over. Add to a laid-back attitude about illegitimacy a belief that, for poor black Americans, welfare represents justified reparations for slavery and racism rather than something to be ashamed of, and you have a recipe for the explosion in the welfare rolls that took place.

"Karl Marx talked about alienated labor; there is nothing more alienating than welfare."

To reduce illegitimacy requires a cultural change. It requires a certain sexual responsibility for all. Compassionate conservatism recognizes that the intact, two-parent family is far and away best for bringing up children to be sturdy citizens, and that therefore it is not right even when rich men abandon their children in search of adventure in middle age. Not all middle-class urban voters will be impervious to this appeal, even though for many of them attachment to the idea of sexual liberation is a key ingredient of their affiliation to the Democratic Party, and even though many of them view Republican calls for "family values" as killjoy as William Blake's vision of the ruined garden of love, "Where priests in black gowns/ Were walking their rounds/ And binding with briars/ My joys and desires."

Compassionate conservatism will have to speak to such voters, not in the voice of punishing parental superego, but in positive terms, appropriating the language of concern for children that left-wing advocates such as the Children's Defense Fund have successfully monopolized for years. Just as you want the best for your own children, compassionate conservatism can ask quite truthfully, don't you want the best for all children? Don't you think as many children as possible should have two loving, or at least responsible, parents—and should be raised in strong families that are as concerned as you are, and work as hard as you do, to do the best for their children? It's hard to imagine that all metropolitan and suburban moms (or dads) will be impervious to this appeal. They might even assent to the idea that more and more women want marriage and children, not the bogus liberation that the sexual revolution purveyed.

From a policy standpoint, government should stop doing all the things it currently does to normalize illegitimacy. For example, it should stop setting up nurseries in high schools, which give the message that having babies is a perfectly normal and acceptable part of life for unmarried teens. It should give married couples preference in allocating scarce public housing units, and it shouldn't penalize them by taxing them more heavily than if they remained cohabiting singles. We should stop kidding ourselves that, again from the point of view of social policy, all families are equal in value. So compassionate conservatism has chosen sides in the culture wars and is willing to use the Bully Pulpit for this cause.

Since some women will still have illegitimate babies despite renewed stigma, George W. Bush, as governor of Texas, has set up four pilot residential hostels for welfare mothers and their babies, suggesting a second way of assuring the welfare of children. These are model compassionate conservative institutions—tough-love establishments, not handouts, that will focus on making sure the babies

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Making sure poor children get the good schools they need is the last civil rights battle.

get the nurture they need to be able to learn and to succeed, something that young welfare mothers often don't know how to provide. Private groups run the hostels—including, thanks to the "charitable choice" provision in the 1996 welfare reform act, two church-related groups, able to provide the clearly enunciated moral values that their clients, like the clients of most social service institutions, need to embrace.

Central to compassionate conservatism is the belief that government bureaucrats do a poor job of providing social services, because they have to be—and are by temperament, anyway—value-neutral, even value-free. And what so many recipients of social services need most is value-*laden* help. They are people who have lost their bearings in life, or never found them, and now find themselves in need of help because they've pursued self-destructive courses. So they need someone to tell them that they must get their lives in order, and here's how to do it. Compassionate conservatism puts a lot of stock in "charitable choice" for that reason: it allows government funds to go to the kind of effective private helping agencies that have no trouble about lacing their help with a message of self-help and personal responsibility.

ompassionate conservatives know that having safer neighborhoods is the one thing that most improves the lives of the poor. For years, the nation's inner-city neighborhoods were anarchies. The public housing projects would crackle with gunfire every night. Residents would eat their dinner sitting on the floor, because they were afraid of stray bullets coming in the window. They'd be afraid, and justly, to send their kids out for a loaf of bread, for fear of violence, and they'd often not take night courses to get ahead or not take a night-shift job for fear of crime

A friend of mine who lives in Harlem was very excited that she'd bought a new sofa. At last, the delivery day came, and the truck bearing the sofa arrived But the toughs who hung out on her doorstep required her to pay them a tribute of $20 to allow the deliverymen to come past them. Now, this is tyranny. It is the primitive tyranny that Tom Paine describes, the tyranny of "a banditti of ruffians." And all the people I am describing did not enjoy the first of all civil rights, the right to be safe in your home and in the streets.

The most fundamental duty of government, as all political philosophers agree, is to ensure this right, and compassionate conservatives share this view They support the kind of activist policing that slashed New York City's overall murder rate by 60 percent

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and has reduced murder even more in crime-ridden poor minority neighborhoods—by almost 90 percent in one. That means, contrary to the liberals' complaint that tougher policing oppresses poor minorities, that the law-abiding majority of inner-city communities can now go out into the street without putting their lives on the line. In fact, the liberal belief that it is somehow friendly to blacks to police lightly seems to assume that many blacks are criminals, when, of course, most are law-abiding citizens who end up disproportionately being the victims of crime. For this reason, President Bush should call an instant halt to the Justice Department investigations that seek to delegitimize the success of the NYPD and of other urban police forces.

The war on drugs that Mayor Giuliani is now waging in New York promises another liberation for inner-city communities. After one intensive law-enforcement effort drove the drug dealers off a certain block, one top cop saw a kid learning how to ride a bicycle on the street. He realized that the boy was older than most neophytes. Why? Until then, his mother hadn't thought the street safe enough to allow him out to practice. And the point is, that when formerly crime-ridden inner-city neighborhoods are policed in this way and order returns, civil society can begin to put forth shoots. Neighbors can watch the streets together—can begin to know one another—and so people can have a sense of being in control of their own lives.

It's astonishing, too, what a powerful economic consequence for cities as a whole, not just for poor neighborhoods, the restoration of public order has. When people aren't afraid to go out at night, restaurants and movie theaters flourish, and tourists aren't afraid to come. So crime turns out to be a huge tax on urban economies, big enough to kill businesses, as we've learned from experience.

Compassionate conservatism accordingly has no patience with the liberal orthodoxy that, in order to cut crime, government has to remove crime's supposed "root causes," poverty and racism. It was a central *neo*conservative insight 30 years ago that criminals are not to be thought of as victims—of social injustice or a bad environment or what have you. The victims are the people criminals assault and rob and rape. Irving Kristol famously described the birth of neoconservatism (which is the progenitor of compassionate conservatism) by saying that neocons were "liberals who'd been mugged by reality." Within the large metaphorical meanings of this statement lurks a quite specific literal meaning, too: that neocons were urban liberals who—like so many urban dwellers in the 1970s—had been victims of crime, or held hostage by fear of crime in their triple-locked apartments, and so had learned by sad first-hand experience how quickly the social order can unravel when the authorities tolerate wrongdoing. To cut crime, you just have to police actively. And you have to have judges and sentencing guidelines and other criminal-justice policies that understand that criminals are malefactors rather than victims.

If public education has long been a bailiwick of the Democrats, with their close teachers' union ties, compassionate conservatives believe that without schools that work, poor children lack the traditional route into the American mainstream. And inner-city public schools today are a notorious national scandal, despite huge per-pupil expenditures. Black and Hispanic students at 17 perform on a par with 13-year-old white students in every subject, and over half of inner-city kids don't graduate from high school. In the words of *City Journal*'s Sol Stern, education reform is the last civil rights battle.

The blame lies at several doors. First, the teachers' unions, which put the employment of their members far above the education of children; second, the state education authorities, which, with few exceptions, don't set high standards for teacher qualification or student achievement. After all, poor inner-city children are educable; inner-city Catholic schools prove it every day. And finally, the school district bureaucracies, which function like leftovers from the Soviet Union and impose a one-size-fits-all education upon infinitely various children with infinitely various needs.

The compassionate conservative solution: much tougher tests for both teachers and students (as Governor Bush's Texas imposed), charter schools free of district regulations and union work rules (such as Arizona hopes to make virtually universal), and publicly funded vouchers to attend private schools, targeted to precisely the poor children whom the public schools are failing so grievously. In what may be an early indicator of the shape of compassionate conservative politics to come, an alliance of Republican

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governors Tommy Thompson and George Voinovich with minority parents has produced publicly funded voucher systems in Milwaukee and Cleveland, and parents with kids in the voucher-supported schools are thrilled. (The sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has just ruled the Cleveland program, which allows voucher recipients to attend parochial schools, unconstitutional; the U.S. Supreme Court is likely to review the decision.) George W. Bush has embraced the idea of federal vouchers to liberate poor kids trapped in failing schools, and he should support the voucher program for the Washington, D.C. schools that congress has repeatedly passed and President Clinton has repeatedly vetoed. The point of these programs is not only to rescue minority kids from public schools right now, before another generation misses its chance, but also to provide the outside competition that will force the public schools to change their hidebound ways in order to survive—as is already happening in Milwaukee. And the voucher idea allows Republicans to make a powerful case to poor urban blacks that they are much more concerned about the fate of their children than are the Democrats, who have become creatures of the teachers' unions, putting their interests always above the interests of children.

The reply from the teachers' unions and their Democratic supporters has been that we need a common school system to induct our kids into a common civic culture. But this claim no longer holds water. What is the common experience that urban public school children share? It is the celebration of difference, of everything that separates us from one another rather than a common civic culture that unites us. When I went to public school, we used to get marked in something called "Citizenship": were we polite, helpful, self-controlled, orderly, cleanly, punctual, hardworking? We learned about what a splendid nation America was, how admirable its democratic, meritocratic, inclusive values were. No more. Now urban schoolchildren learn of America's history of oppressiveness and genocide. They learn of the country's unjust and ever-inflamed victimization of their own ethnic groups and its victimization of people around the world. Instead of manners and civility, they learn only condom etiquette. They read, in the name of inclusiveness, such divisive texts as *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy's Roommate*. So this is a center that will not hold.

Unlike traditional Republicans, compassionate conservatives like immigrants. They admire their energy and enterprise, which have revitalized vast swathes of New York and Los Angeles and have done the nation the favor of proving that there is no scarcity of economic opportunity in America. All you have to do is go out and make it, rather than waiting around for the government to bring it to you. The only danger is that this enthusiasm for immigrants has sometimes led compassionate conservatives to back policies, especially welfare benefits for immigrants, that promote dependency and separatism. What made the urban immigration of yesteryear so successful is that immigrants universally came seeking opportunity to work, and they dreamed of becoming part of the American community. Compassionate conservatives need to hold fast to this optimistic message.

What happens when all these policies take hold and the poor ascend into the economic mainstream? The last important compassionate conservative policy is to make sure the government doesn't tax them back into poverty. The Bush administration will need to rejigger the tax code and the Social Security tax to make sure that working people get to enjoy the fruits of their labor and don't see their increased earnings confiscated to pay benefits to their non-working neighbors. It will need to make sure that the reward for work is significantly more than for non-work. And that's why the new administration will also need to make sure that government doesn't subsidize the unruly non-working poor to move in to neighborhoods that the near-poor are, sometimes precariously and always at great effort, trying to keep decent and orderly.

One of the remarkable features of the recent presidential campaign was the unwillingness of Vice President Gore to engage compassionate conservatism. It was as if that theme was so potent a piece of political jiu-jitsu that Democrats didn't even want to raise the subject of race and poverty, emphasizing instead only middle-class entitlements until the very last, desperate days before the election—and the even more desperate ones of the recount. Compassionate conservatives should take heart from this Democratic avoidance. It is most likely an indication that the liberals have no worthwhile arguments against an idea whose time has come.

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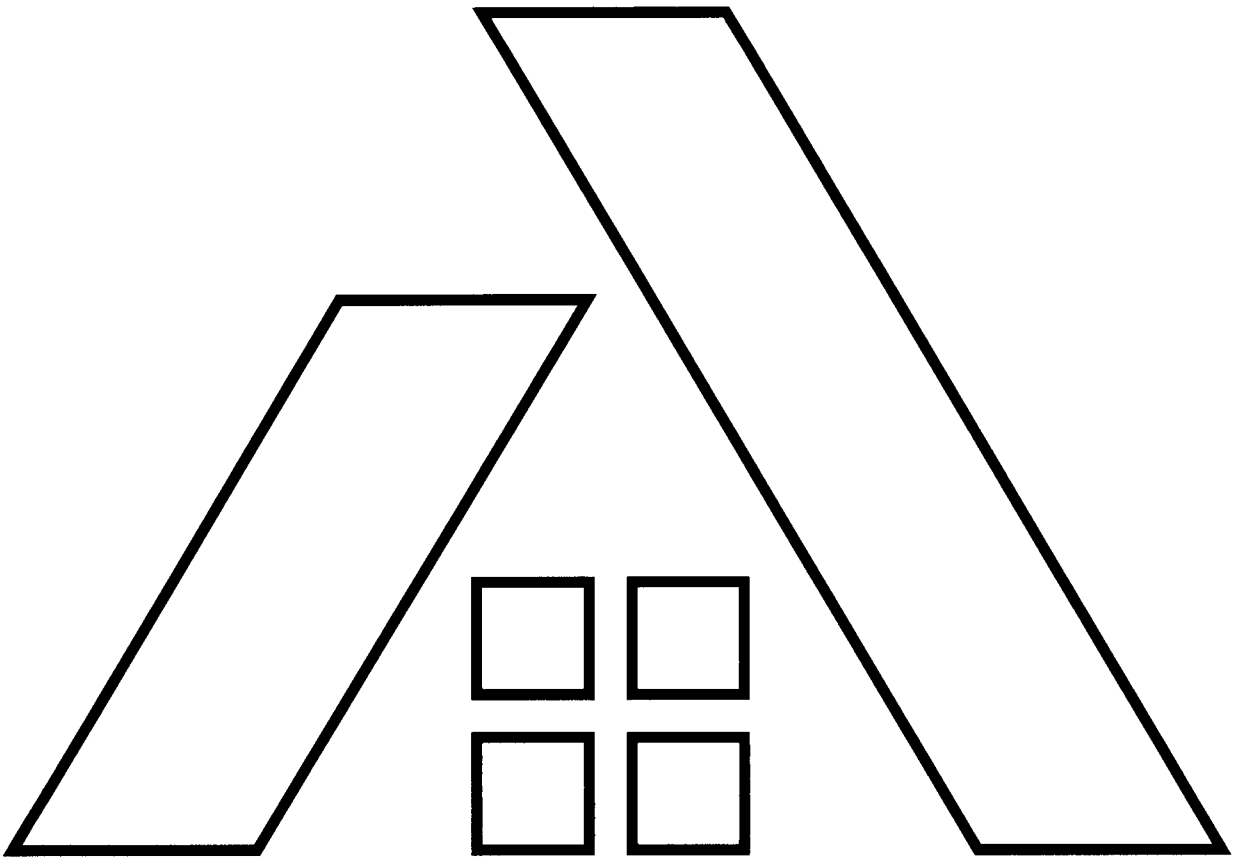

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What's Holding Blacks Back?

It's black attitudes, not white racism, that's to blame.

John H. McWhorter

When I was ten, my mother made me read *Roots* cover to cover, and she'd coax me to curl up beside her to watch old newsreels of black civil rights protesters being hosed, beaten, and dragged off to prison. We watched Norman Lear sitcoms, so I'd learn from Archie Bunker and crew what blacks had faced in the past. Later, she made sure I read accounts of black America before the civil rights movement. I learned of black lawyers working as office clerks, black classical musicians stuck orchestrating cheap stage revues, brilliant black professors trapped in threadbare segregated colleges; I read of the Scottsboro Boys, Emmett Till, and the assassination of Martin Luther King.

Such things filled me with horror—but then with relief, even triumph. After all, wasn't the point of *All in the Family* that Archie was powerless in the face of his daughter and son-in-law's racially progressive positions? Didn't his black neighbors have the moral upper hand—and wasn't it they, not Archie, who got to move to the Upper East Side? By my twenties, in the 1990s, I felt grateful and excited to live in times of bracing progress for my race.

Yet during the decade I came to realize that this feeling made me odd man out among most black Americans. In every race-related debate—whether over Rodney King, O. J. Simpson, the Million Man March, Ebonics, or affirmative action—almost every black person I knew, many with backgrounds as comfortable as my own, started from the fierce conviction that, decades after the Civil Rights Act, whitey's foot remains pressed upon all black Americans' necks. For most black Americans, the rapid increase of the black middle class, of interracial relationships and marriages, and of blacks in prestigious positions has no bearing on the real state of black America. Further, they believe, whites' inability to grasp the unmistakable reality of oppression is itself proof of racism, while blacks who question that reality are self-deluded.

Doubtless some black leaders mouth the ideology of victimhood for political advantage: "Confrontation works," as Al Sharpton has calculatingly observed. But most rank-and-file exponents of the "racism forever" worldview really mean it. Their conviction rests on seven articles of faith, carefully passed from person to person at all levels of the black community. These beliefs, rather than what remains of racism itself, are the biggest obstacle to further black progress in today's America. And all are either outright myths or severe distortions of truth.

One: *Most black people are poor (and middle-class blacks are statistical noise).* Almost half of the blacks surveyed in a Gallup poll supposed that three out of four black people live in inner cities. Yet in 2001 most black people are neither poor nor even close to it: by any estimation, middle-class blacks outnumber poor ones. And at last count, only one in five blacks lived in the inner city.

Two: *Black people earn 61 percent of what whites do.* Though accurate as a nationwide median in 1995, this figure is dragged down by the disproportionate number of single black welfare mothers. Black two-parent families earned 87 percent of what white two-parent families earned in 1995. Also distorting the median is the disproportionate number of blacks who live in the South, where wages are lower overall. If you look only at specific areas rather than at the nation as a whole, black household earnings in 1994 exceeded whites' in 130 cities and counties across the nation.

Three: *An epidemic of racist church burnings has swept across the South.* There was never any such thing: about 80 black churches were burned from 1990 to 1996—but then over seven times that many white churches burned as well.

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Four: *The CIA created the inner cities by pumping drugs into them.* This one pops up in pamphlet after pamphlet at leftist marches and gatherings; it is taught to many black college students. But the *San Jose Mercury*'s charges on this score proved false. Yes, some CIA agents aiding the Nicaraguan contras decided to look the other way and allow them to profit from some drug sales to California, but that's hardly a plot to addict blacks in all of America's inner cities.

Five: *Because black men are disproportionately incarcerated, racism reigns eternal.* This belief assumes that blacks do not commit crimes any more frequently than whites. But if black men make up almost 50 percent of the prison population, they committed roughly 42 percent of violent crimes in the 1990s, and many studies have shown that, when severity of crime and past record are taken into account, there is no bias against blacks in the criminal justice system. At its inception, the War on Drugs, often interpreted as a "War on Blacks," had the strong support of the Congressional Black Caucus, whose members aimed to stem inner-city violence. If these black officials, who at the time exhorted Congress to "save our communities," were racists, then the definition of this term is beyond my comprehension.

Six: *Racial profiling is racism.* It can be—but just as often isn't. In some parts of the country, black men are so overrepresented in criminal activities that police officers, white and black, would be shirking their duty not to concentrate on them. Sure, sometimes profiling ends up detaining more blacks than their rate of conviction for the targeted crime justifies, as with drivers recently stopped and searched for drugs in New Jersey. But even here, officers generally have acted less out of race hatred than out of a pragmatic assessment that they can fill their quotas faster by focusing on a group that commits a disproportionate share of crime. Inappropriate, yes—and widely condemned as such: indication Number 674 that racism is on the wane.

COLLECTION INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY, GIFT OF DANIEL COWIN, 1990 (6)

An earlier age's ideal. . .

I have always suspected that today's profiling-must-stop contingent secretly believes that whites *deserve* black crime as retribution for oppression. But to halt all profiling would increase the number of *blacks* murdered, mostly by other blacks. And black leaders would cite this rise as further evidence of racism, as happened in New York in the 1980s, when cops turned a blind eye to a wave of black crime. Many of those crying racism about today's New York City policing were sounding the same call about the Dinkins administration's lax policing.

Seven: *Excessive police brutality against blacks shows that racism reigns eternal.* Certainly blacks have suffered greater police brutality than whites. But this constitutes not the prevalence of overt racism, but its last holdout; as Orlando Patterson argues,

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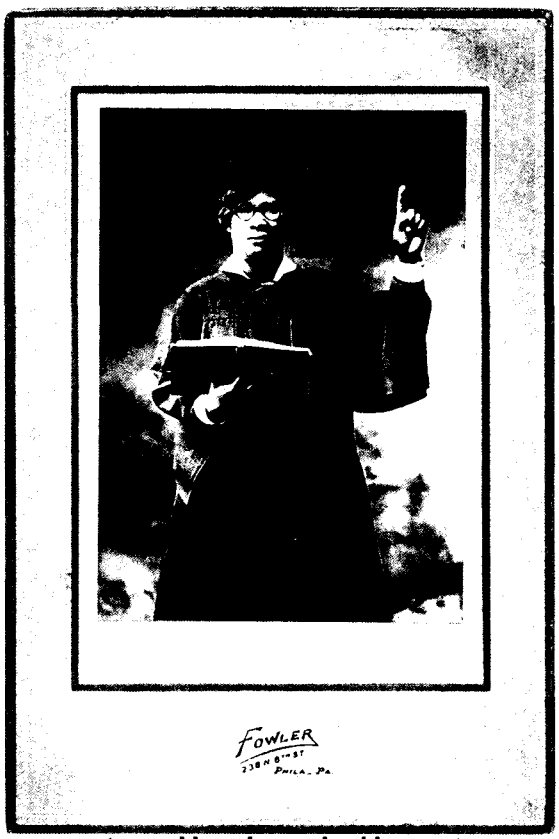
you'd expect racism to persist longest precisely among undereducated keepers of order working under conditions likely to spark impulsiveness. And most important, the police brutality situation is improving rapidly. For example, though I think Officer Justin Volpe would not have brutalized a white suspect as he brutalized Haitian Abner Louima, his expectation that the "blue wall of silence" would protect him proved false. In the Diallo and Dorismond killings, the undertraining of police officers to deal with chaotic, tense situations was much more at fault than white racism—and, of course, black officers have been involved in similar cases across the country, though such cases don't get headlines in the liberal media.



. . . stressed learning and achievment, . . .

These articles of faith add up to a deeply felt cult of victimology that grips the entire black community. Some subscribe to it fiercely; most accept it as a valid point of view, at least. The "serious brother" who launches into a tirade about the War on Blacks at a party sets heads nodding all over the room.

You'd think that a group committed to advancement would avoid such an obsessive focus on the negative, especially when the negative steadily fades from year to year. But blacks, inevitably, suffer from a classic post-colonial inferiority complex. Like insecure people everywhere, they are driven by a private sense of personal inadequacy to seeing imaginary obstacles to their success supposedly planted by others. Once the 1968 Kerner Commission report fueled that tendency by positing that American racism was an institutional, systemic matter rather than a merely personal one, black leaders and thinkers, haunted by the oppressor's lie that blacks were inferior, worked obsessively to find evidence, often fantastical, of "the system's" evil.

In the grip of this seductive ideology, blacks have made the immobilizing assumption that individual initiative can lead only to failure, with only a few exceptionally gifted or lucky exceptions. Yet many groups have triumphed over similar (or worse) obstacles—including millions of Caribbean and African immigrants in America, from Colin Powell to the thousands of Caribbean children succeeding in precisely the crumbling schools where black American kids fail. Indeed, thinkers such as Thomas Sowell and Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom argue that American blacks could have advanced—and were advancing—even without the civil rights legislation of the sixties and the racial preferences of the seventies, since black unemployment was at an all-time low in the mid-sixties, and the black middle class was already growing fast. But these facts can't outweigh the almost narcotic pleasure that underdoggism provides a race plagued by self-doubt.

Blacks aren't the only people who've sabotaged themselves through victimology. Take the

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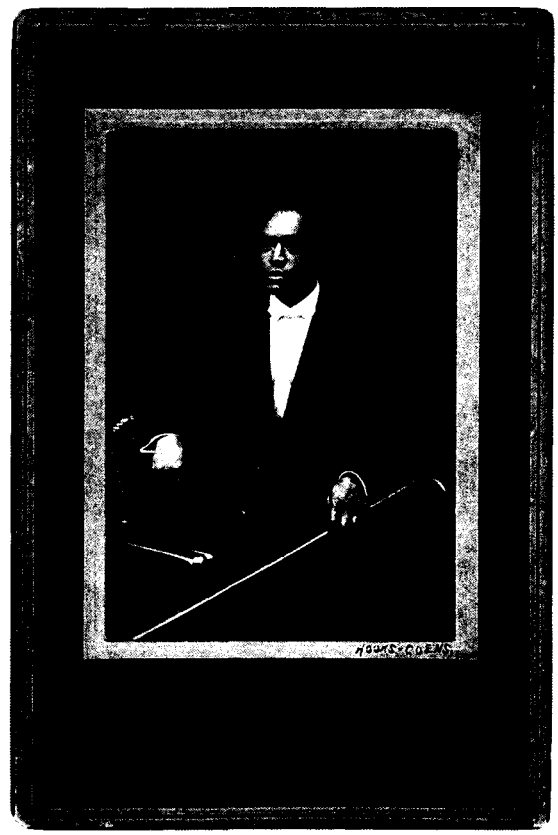
eerily similar case of the Boston Irish, the target of contempt and discrimination in nineteenth-century America. By the 1920s, when anti-Irish bigotry had receded greatly, historical memory allowed Mayor James Michael Curley to maintain power by stoking Irish resentment very like today's black resentment. Curley found "anti-Irish" sentiment everywhere: merit hiring systems were "anti-Irish"; "Anglo-Saxon" culture was fatally diseased. Even today, the remnant of this mentality still traps members of South Boston's Irish community in crummy housing projects full of idle adults who have high rates of substance abuse and even speak a local dialect it takes a little while to wrap one's ears around. In South Boston, as in South Central, a fatalistic skepticism that you can rise above your community and a deeply embedded wariness of mainstream culture thwart ambition even where opportunity is available.



. . . sensitivity and delicacy, . . .

The victimology cult has in turn engendered a cult of black separatism. Inspired by the Black Power movement of the 1960s, which violently rejected whites as terminally evil, today's separatism, in the same vein, flirts disastrously with the idea that, because white racism ineluctably drives black people outside the bounds of civic virtue, blacks shouldn't be seriously punished or morally condemned for criminal behavior. Black transgressiveness is understandable, even "cool." A typical consequence of this view was the feting of the four black youths who maimed several people in Los Angeles after the Rodney King verdict, with the Nation of Islam setting up a defense fund for the "L.A. Four." The most recent manifestation of the idea was Jesse Jackson's intervention when a Decatur, Illinois, high school suspended for two years seven black teenagers who injured bystanders during a gang fight at a school football game. Jackson painted this response to thuggery as a racist attempt to deny "our children" an education.

The worst result of the sense that black America is a fundamentally separate realm is a widespread cult of anti-intellectualism. Consider the data: even in middle-class suburbs, increasing numbers of middle-class black students tend to cluster at the bottom of their schools in grades and test scores. Black students whose parents earn $70,000 a year or more make median SAT scores lower than impoverished white students whose parents make $6,000 a year or less, while black students whose parents both have graduate degrees make mean SAT scores lower than white students whose parents only completed high school.

Why? All through modern black American culture, even throughout black academia, the belief prevails that learning for learning's sake is a white affair and therefore inherently disloyal to a proper black identity. Studying black-related issues is

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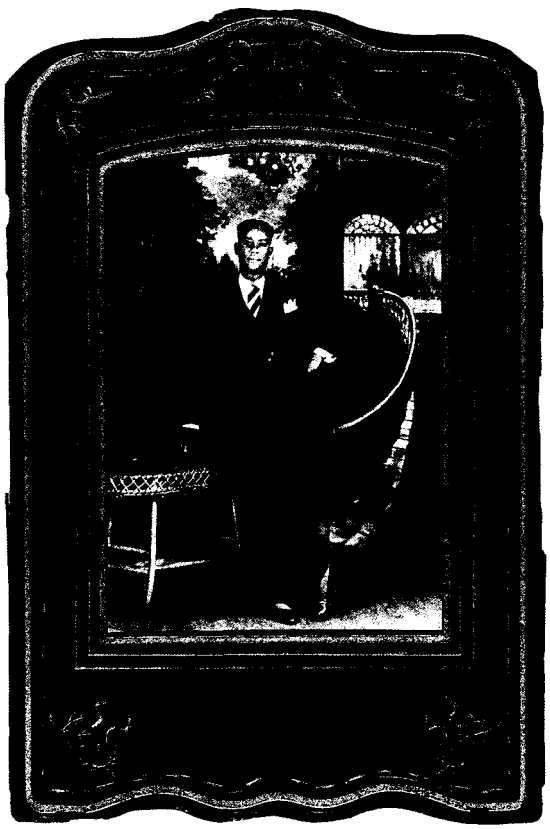
okay, because learning about oneself is authentic. But this impulse also implicitly classifies science as irrelevant, which is the direct cause of the underrepresentation of minorities in the hard sciences. The sense that the properly "black" person only delves into topics related to himself is also why you can count on one hand the number of books by black Americans that are not on racial topics.

The belief that blacks and school don't go together has its roots in slavery's refusal to let blacks be educated. But it gained strength in the mid-1960s, when black separatism rejected traits associated with whites as alien, and black students, in this spirit, began teasing their fellows who strove to excel in school as "acting white," a much harsher taunt than merely dismissing them as nerds. When I was four—and this is my very first memory—a group of black kids in the neighborhood stopped me and asked me to spell a word. When I did, one of them directed his little sister to hit me repeatedly. I later watched a friend of mine treated similarly for answering such questions as, "How far is it from New Jersey to Florida," and I'll never forget being asked by one of his tormentors, "Are *you* smart?" in the menacing tone you'd use to ask, "Did you steal my money?"



. . . sophistication and stylishness, . . .

The "acting white" charge—which implies that you think yourself different from, and better than, your peers—is the prime reason that blacks do poorly in school. The gifted black student quickly faces a choice between peer group acceptance and intellectual achievement. Most, out of an utterly human impulse, choose the former. Even if they open themselves to schooling in college or later, their performance all too often permanently suffers from the message they long ago internalized that "the school thing" is an add-on, not a mix-in.

The prevailing orthodoxy lays the blame on other factors, of course, but none of them withstands scrutiny. The fact that the children of working poor immigrants, including black Caribbean and African immigrants, often do well in school, disproves the claim that their working-class roots deny today's newly middle-class blacks the "cultural capital" to teach their children to excel in school. The success of Southeast Asian immigrants' children in the same terrible inner-city schools in which black students fail disproves the Jonathan Kozol gospel that it is the "savage inequality" of school funding that makes black kids fail. Though Kozol's followers counter that immigrants are an inappropriate comparison because they are a "self-selected" population, rich in initiative, Latinos are also self-selected immigrants and yet lag behind in school almost as much as blacks—which shows that culture plays a major role among immigrants. Finally, educators often assert that white teachers are biased against black children, dousing their initia-

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tive early on and then tracking them away from advanced placement classes. However, studies repeatedly suggest that teachers track based on demonstrated ability—and, again, black Caribbean and African children do fine, despite presumably suffering the same treatment as native-born blacks.

Finally, what of Claude Steele's influential argument that middle-class black students underachieve in school because fear of confirming the stereotype of black mental inferiority makes them choke up on tests? I know from my own experience that there's a grain of truth in this argument. But a tiny grain: after all, college assignments are not composed to test racial abilities. And all these conventional arguments neglect the elephant sitting in the middle of the room: if black students who try to achieve in school get sharply teased for it and threatened with ostracism, why would we *not* expect this to be the main cause of their academic underachievement?

. . . high artistic seriousness, . . .

One well-studied case decisively confutes all the conventional arguments. In tony suburban Shaker Heights, Ohio, funding is generous, support programs aimed at black students (about half of the student population, not an alienated minority) abound, there is no ability tracking (students track themselves), and such racism as can be found is too intermittent to destroy the academic curiosity of a human being of normal resilience. Yet blacks there cluster at the very bottom of the school, and black students report that they come up against the "acting white" charge whenever they try to excel. One girl interviewed there knuckled under to this teasing and saw her grades plummet, while white students interviewed talked about how, in many of their cliques, doing well in school was "cool." Districts all over the country, including Evanston, Illinois, Prince George's County, Maryland, and Nyack, New York, report similar results.

Victimology, separatism, and anti-intellectualism underlie the general black community's response to all race-related issues. The response to affirmative action is a case in point. Blacks see it as a policy that appropriately bends the rules for a people denied the opportunity to compete on a level playing field—a notion that in 2001, when middle-class blacks are a massive and thriving group in American society, can only seem plausible through the lens of victimology. The defense of affirmative action on the grounds of "diversity" is an expression of separatism. After all, since there are not enough black students to be admitted to selective schools on the same merits as the other students, beyond a certain cut-off point blacks are being valued as much for their distinct and separate cultural traits as for their academic accomplishment. This is a state of affairs, moreover, that requires a strong dose of anti-intellectualism to accept without discomfort. And the same anti-intellectualism rests content with the

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flimsy reasoning behind all defenses of affirmative action: that because black students are overrepresented in underfunded public schools, for example, it is immoral for colleges to require a top-quality dossier from the black child of a doctor and a corporate manager, or that, as William Bowen and Derek Bok argue in the sickeningly overpraised *The Shape of the River*, affirmative action ought be continued indefinitely because its first generations of beneficiaries didn't mind it and are happy with their lives.

Today, these three thought patterns impede black advancement much more than racism; and dysfunctional inner cities, corporate glass ceilings, and black educational underachievement will persist until such thinking disappears. In my experience, trying to show many African-Americans how mistaken and counterproductive these ideas are is like trying to convince a religious person that God does not exist: the sentiments are beyond the reach of rational, civil discourse.

After I gave a talk at a black bookstore outlining why the conventional explanations for black students' underperformance don't hold water, a matriarchal figure simply dismissed my argument by pronouncing that America is "set against" black students, period—to the applause of the entire room. *Time* magazine's Jack E. White wrote a disparaging review of my new book, *Losing the Race* ("Come on, Professor"), which simply repeated the traditional explanations of what holds black students back, as if he hadn't been able to take in my chapters arguing against just these points. During another talk I gave on the book, one black schoolteacher kept interrupting to insist, fantastically, that when black students accuse others of "acting white," they are criticizing these students for not teaching their peers how to excel in school as well.

. . . and marriage.

There was a time when fighting and decrying institutional racism was the main task at hand, and blacks of my generation owe a debt of gratitude to those who did it; our comfortable lives would be impossible without their efforts. Today, though, these people are well-intentioned relics of another era, an era they in their moment helped us to get past. Our main concern must be with new generations, who can fulfill their potential only in an America where victimology, separatism, and anti-intellectualism don't flourish among black Americans. There are two main paths to this goal.

First, it's time for well-intentioned whites to stop pardoning as "understandable" the worst of human nature whenever black people exhibit it. The person one pities is a person one may like but does not truly respect. Certainly whites must keep extirpating vestiges of racism, even within their own souls. But for David Howard to concur with his firing by Washington mayor Anthony Williams for using the word "niggardly"

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is condescension, not compassion; for Nathan Glazer to reverse his longstanding opposition to affirmative action because whites "owe" black people is to cast blacks as characters in a morality play, not to usher living human beings out of a historically conditioned wariness of school.

Second, it's time for our selective educational institutions to eliminate affirmative action in admissions. This policy may have been useful in the 1960s in creating a black middle class. Today, however, the children of Bowen and Bok's happy campers are hobbled from top academic performance not by poverty and residual bigotry, as their parents often were, but by a sense of spiritual separation from the whole endeavor of learning, an estrangement that set-aside policies and lowered standards cannot help. To achieve in any endeavor, people need incentives. As long as top colleges exempt black students of all classes from serious competition, their admissions officers shouldn't wonder why so few black students submit top-class dossiers. Only without such a policy will parents, teachers, and school boards, genuinely alarmed at drop-offs in "diversity" in institutions of higher learning, start to help black children become truly competitive for selective schools. What happened after California ended legalized racial preferences in 1995 is a case in point. Programs exploded throughout the state to prepare minorities to be competitive and to eliminate their financial barriers to college.

Eliminating affirmative action will also help dispel black college students' resentment-tinged anxiety that their white classmates dismiss them as affirmative action picks. It will promote richer interracial contact among students poised to become the nation's leaders. The tacit understanding is that white students somehow ought not suspect that blacks got in under the door—but this is a hopelessly unrealistic fiction, given that in 28 selective schools in 1989 less than one in four white students with SAT scores in the 1250–99 bracket was admitted, while three out of four black ones with the same scores got in, as *The Shape of the River* reports. The black student who can confidently claim to be on campus for the exact same reasons that white and Asian students are there is less likely to embrace the myth, which many black college students cherish, that whites are all covert racists.

I believe the time is ripe for such changes. People often ask me how black people have received *Losing the Race*, expecting me to describe a fearsome litany of invective and condemnation. Sure, I've gotten some of that—one letter or e-mail a week, perhaps, along with the predictable tirades on black radio call-in shows. Doubtless plenty of blacks who don't call in or write me also find the book repulsive. But almost all the letters and messages I've received from African-Americans from all walks of life all over the country have been positive. At last count I've heard from over 200 blacks, most telling me that my book says things they have long despaired of hearing from our so-called civil rights leaders. Black college students write, telling me that my book helped them understand the internal, cultural factors working against achievement. Older blacks write, agreeing with me that there was a crucial and damaging change in black ideology in the mid-1960s. I have even received three laudatory letters from black prisoners, all recounting how they subscribed to the party-faithful line in their youth but have rejected it since. I have also taken relatively little abuse on the radio shows: as one black man said to me calling into one of them, "Man, black people aren't yelling at you because they think you're wrong; they're just mad that you're saying it where white people can hear you." My views, I've concluded, are really not so out of step.

Perhaps 20 years from now mainstream black thought will join me in stressing individual initiative and integration. And perhaps the national media will get on the bandwagon too. Today, when I'm interviewed on TV or in the paper, a disparaging comment from some black leftist inevitably is part of the story, though when a Derrick Bell or a June Jordan is interviewed, never do reporters feel the need to bring in Shelby Steele or Walter Williams for their "alternative viewpoint." Let's hope that in 2021, the networks won't feel that any talk of black personal responsibility needs to be balanced by victimology from some fading anachronism like Ishmael Reed or Maxine Waters. That's when we will know that we are past the coded fraud that passes for interracial discourse today and have made the kind of progress that yesterday's civil rights' leaders would recognize and applaud.

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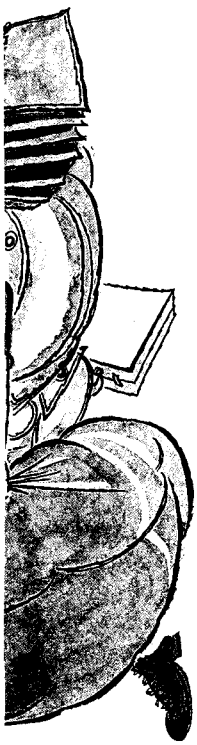
Ecstatic Capitalism's Brave New Work Ethic

The new economy, where work merges with play and the office becomes home, has released a powerful flood of energy and creativity. As always, there's a cost.



Kay S. Hymowitz

In 1969, I dropped out of college and drove to San Francisco with my boyfriend in a wheezy Ford Falcon to join thousands of other bell-bottomed post-adolescents hanging out in Golden Gate Park and the streets around Haight-Ashbury. It was easy enough to tell what these people stood for, but impossible to know how they made a living. Rejecting what they viewed as the soul-killing demands of bourgeois life, they were there not to work but to play, to seek what Hillary Clinton called, in her now-famous Wellesley graduation speech that year, "more immediate, ecstatic, penetrating modes of living." My boyfriend and I were no different. We shared the same career aspirations—which is to say, none. To put food in our mouths, he would take a temporary teaching job, though he thought that driving a cab sounded cool; maybe I would get a job in a store. We weren't worried: rents were cheap, we were young, we had a safety net in the form of suburban parents, and heads swimming with the utopian dreams of our generation.

To go to San Francisco today is to be struck with a weird kind of *déjà vu*: hordes of the idealistic young, acutely conscious of being part of a revolution that their elders only dimly understand, still dominate the city. But there the resemblance with the youthquake of 30 years ago ends. These Banana Republic–clad revolutionaries work like immigrants. They talk of nothing but work; they spend 10, 12, 14 hours, or even more at work; they dream of work.

Pragmatists would explain their zeal by skyrocketing rent and real-estate costs; cynics would say the crass materialism long threatening to overwhelm the American spirit has finally triumphed. Although both of these explanations have some truth, neither tells the whole story. For to hear them talk, these young men and women also love the risk, the intensity, the speed, the camaraderie, even what they sometimes call the "soulfulness" of work in the new economy. In the late sixties, our idea of the wind through our hair was *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*; theirs is *Fast Company* ("More than a Magazine—It's a Movement!"). Our notion of scenery was Big Sur and the hills of fragrant eucalyptus; theirs is the office park. Our idea of a drug was hashish; theirs is Café Grande. In short, if our religion was Peace and Love, theirs is Ecstatic Capitalism.

Make no mistake though: ecstatic capitalism is no mere local or generational phenomenon. Yes, its Rome is San Francisco and Silicon Valley, and its prophets are largely under 30, but its followers are everywhere and include everyone from

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

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recent entrants to the AARP to college kids to (amazingly) preschoolers. True, not everyone is as fervent as the young crusaders of the high-tech sector. But it's pretty clear that while Americans are deeply divided over many of the cultural values that they once took for granted, just about everyone embraces a high-energy, high-spirited new work ethic.

Increasingly, we view work not just as a way to pay the rent and the orthodontist but as an end in itself. We expect work to offer excitement or "serious fun," as the editors of *Fast Company* put it; we seek in work both individual meaning and community in a way that defies not just the countercultural expectations of 30 years ago but much of our philosophical and intellectual tradition. And yet, this hardly means that utopia is on its way. The costs of this unexpected transformation in the national psyche may be subtle, but they are a bit disquieting nonetheless.

If you want to see ecstatic capitalism in its purest form, visit a place like Sparks.com, a young start-up company selling greeting cards over the Internet. Sparks occupies a cavernous warehouse in San Francisco's India Basin, far from the city's sophisticated cafés and shops, beyond even the train tracks at its edges. Inside the warehouse, you find a cross between a college dorm and a campaign war room. Each employee sits at a plank of wood on two sawhorses, individually decorated with company-supplied paint. An amateurish mural showing the joyous smiles of pleasure caused by a Sparks greeting card takes up one wall. The "conference room's" shag rug and bright yellow and orange beanbag chairs, along with the warehouse's foosball table and basketball court, further confound all conventional notions of "workplace."

As the ponytailed Chief Technical Officer skateboards through the aisles in his workshirt and sneakers, young engineers in T-shirts consult with one another, ignoring the blaring rock music and the occasional dog sniffing at their feet. They also have to shout over the sound of the hammers and drills of workmen who, following the request of Sparks's employees, are installing a giant sliding board and fire pole between the new loft and ground floor. On Friday afternoons, the group has barbecues; in October, pumpkin-decorating parties. A "corporate massage therapist" visits regularly.

This playful exuberance coexists with a zealous work ethic. Allison Behr, the 29-year-old public-relations director who is showing me around, tells me that she works 11 hours a day, except during the weeks near the Christmas rush, when everyone at Sparks burns the midnight oil. In her world, this is no oddity—area legend has it that when a 24-year-old Netscape programmer told a survey company that he worked between 110 and 120 hours per week, the researcher objected that his computerized questionnaire wouldn't accept a number that big. Allison has no complaints. Yes, she has to do her grocery shopping at 10 PM, but "it's a good time to shop, because it isn't crowded." Beyond that, Allison says, "I don't do a lot of errands because I'm having too much fun with my co-workers." The spirit of camaraderie is ever present: "You rarely see people here doing anything alone," she reports. Like many ecstatic capitalists, Allison is partial to the word "soul": "It's important to us that we do things that are soulful." "Our hearts and souls and guts go into this." "Sparks is a company with soul."

Sparks perfectly captures ecstatic capitalism's major themes—the long hours, the blurring between work and play, the youthful energy and intensity, the sense of both individual meaning and recovered community in a fragmented world. Observers of the dot.com scene have been noting all this for close to a decade, but now this redefined work ethic is colonizing adjacent sectors of the new economy. Knowledge workers in all fields are working like mad, as are young singles in general: the Families and Work Institute found that 73 percent of today's 25- to 32-year-olds work more than 40 hours per week, compared with 55 percent in 1977. And Arlie Hochschild reports in *The Time Bind* that when a Fortune 500 company offered workers ways to cut back their hours, the employees—and especially women with children—rarely took advantage of them.

Work now spreads out of the cubicle and oozes into just about every corner of our lives. Recently, *Fast Company* profiled Steelcase, a giant

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office-furniture manufacturer in Grand Rapids, Michigan, seemingly light years away from the 24/7 digerati outfits in Redwood City or Austin. Yet Steelcase shows dramatically how completely the new-economy ethos is being grafted onto old-economy businesses. Christine Albertini, vice president and general manager, describes habits that make an official category like "working hours" seem quaint: "I work in the car, home, office, airplane, hotel room, on the street corner," she says. "I work at volleyball practice, hockey games, gymnastics," seconds her marketing communications manager.

In this spirit, Steelcase is expanding the entire notion of office furniture. "Their job," reports *Fast Company*, "is to figure out how to furnish the whole world so you can work in it, effortlessly, seamlessly, continuously"—something that any recent traveler can attest has already happened. Airports are outfitted with computer connections, fax machines, and work stations; planes and trains are simply cubicles that happen to be speeding through cumulus clouds and fields of green while you make business calls and work your spreadsheet. And when you arrive at even the most alluring destination, you simply settle into another office away from the office. Marriott hotels have installed more than 20,000 "Rooms that Work" with special desks, phone jacks, ergonomic chairs, and around-the-room Internet access. Hyatt hotels now offer "Plug and Play" Internet access to their customers.

So why aren't American workers rising up and storming the CEO offices at the prospect of what Netscape programmers once dubbed "all work, all the time?" A 30-year-old quoted in *Fortune* explains: "Work is not work. It's a hobby you happen to get paid for." Knowledge work satisfies human longings in a way that factory or traditional corporate work rarely could. It requires thinking and creativity. New management theories stressing the autonomy of individual employees have softened the coercive, hierarchical nature of work. Many Americans now expect their job to feel as if it were an emanation of their own desires and on their own time.

In fact, our jobs define our identity. In France and England, it's bad form to ask, "What do you do?" Such a rule would leave Americans speechless. In the U.S., you are what you do. Management guru Tom Peters has even written a book entitled *The Brand Called You*, in which he urges workers to imagine themselves as the company and the product. "You are CEO of Me Inc.," he writes. "[T]o grow your brand you've got to come to terms with power—your own."

"Many Americans now expect their job to feel as if it were an emanation of their own desires and on their own time."

This Nietzsche-in-the-cubicle philosophy has a spiritual side that appears to be especially appealing to Gen-Xers. "Our generation has a spiritual void in the space previously filled by religion or patriotism," the young editor of *Silicon Alley Reporter* writes. "[L]ifelong learning and self-development will become our generation's new religion."

It's in the more innovative sectors of the new economy that work has taken on the most existential quality, the naked self realizing itself in a test against the elements. Tom Ashbrook's memoir *The Leap*, a title combining athleticism and faith, is a good example of what we might call X-treme work. Nearing 40, a happily married suburban father of three, a writer and editor at the *Boston Globe*, Ashbrook nevertheless felt himself "a hungry soul." But if midlife crises led men of a previous generation to love affairs or sports cars, Ashbrook looked to the new economy to awaken his deadened spirit: he decided to start an Internet company.

Like an athlete, he gives up coffee in order to seek "a natural high." He wants his adventure to take him "from security to risk. From the known to the unknown. From well-grazed limits to open vistas"—and in a way it does, when, after superhuman hours, salaryless months, and reckless borrowing, he nearly lands in bankruptcy and divorce court. But by the end of his story, this reporter, who had once traveled to third-world countries with his social conscience on his sleeve, now sheds the tears

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of a champion in the new-economy marathon, a wholehearted convert to ecstatic capitalism, when his dot.com business finally takes off.

Though few Americans will probably ever experience the thrill of X-treme work, ecstatic capitalism's blurring of work and play affects all areas of the economy. Younger companies sponsor capture-the-flag games or afternoons of paintball tournaments. Other firms boast putting greens, horseshoe pits, and game rooms with pinball machines and Ping-Pong tables. People walk through the hallways in socks or bare feet; they decorate their cubicles with their favorite toys. Work is so fun and cool that it has even become a fashion statement. A recent Banana Republic ad campaign set in an office shows a svelte young woman holding a phone to her ear with her head thrown back, laughing hilariously, as a hand holds out another phone toward her. What's so funny? The only text is the same as the other ads in this campaign: the word "Work."

According to most of our philosophy and religion, not to mention our historical experience, none of this makes much sense. Work and play, labor and pleasure, were supposed to be opposites. In the Bible, paradise offers leisure and ease; out of Eden, man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Work was supposed to be all dutiful superego—Freud believed that it rested on a renunciation of erotic instinct; leisure was id, freedom, festivals. Anyone who could manage to avoid work would; that's why we talk—or used to talk—of the idle rich.

Nineteenth-century utopian novels like Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and William Dean Howells's *A Traveler from Altruia* assumed that progress would inevitably lead to leisure, with time for hobbies, civic engagement, family, and neighborly sociability. Benjamin Hunnicutt, author of *Work Without End* and professor of leisure studies (!) at the University of Iowa, notes that the American labor movement's very first pamphlet was an early nineteenth-century call for reducing daily work hours from 12 to 10 and eventually to 8 or even 6. Even when work moved increasingly from the factory to the corporate office, social critics continued to contrast the world of work, which forced men in Gray Flannel Suits into a mold of dehumanizing conformity, with the world of home and leisure, where they could be themselves. As Peter and Brigitte Berger wrote in *The Homeless Mind*: "The private sphere has served as a kind of balancing mechanism providing meanings and meaningful activities for the discontents brought about by the large structures of modern society."

Sixties gurus, including Charles Reich in *The Greening of America*, echoed the nineteenth-century utopians and predicted the coming of a new day when technology-driven abundance would expand the opportunities for self-expression in leisure and private life. Less sanguine, Daniel Bell warned in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* in 1976 that, once released, hedonism would undermine and even vanquish the work ethic, something that seemed already coming to pass around Haight-Ashbury in 1969.

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But even as Bell was writing, the opposition between work and leisurely individual expression, public and private, was already easing: as David Brooks put it in a subchapter heading in his recent *Bobos in Paradise*, "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism—Resolved!" Feminists began the process. In her 1963 *Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan announced that it was the home that was the prison, while the public sphere promised self-expression and liberation. Though Christopher Lasch argued that Friedan's book was less a call for women to go to the office than for "commitment" to volunteer work, say, or to other sorts of civic participation, later feminists balked. The only route to women's liberation, they argued, was paid work.

The much-discussed discontents of the Organization Man didn't worry them. They saw work as offering women freedom from the restrictive, stereotypical roles of wife and mother. Public ambition—work life, in particular—increasingly came to seem the way one could express the real self. Throughout her recent book, *Flux*, Peggy Orenstein dramatizes how contemporary feminists take these ideas for granted. Career, she says, "requires the assertion of self," whereas relationships "repress . . . [one's] essential self." As for motherhood: "Your whole identity as a person gets swallowed up in [a baby]," she fears. These words mark an amazing transformation: work is now the arena where the true self can blossom; private life and the leisure it offers threaten to make us boring and inauthentic.

Today's workamaniacs wholly subscribe to the feminists' reversal of the traditional distinction between public and private. Work, in the words of *Fast Company*, "is personal." Accordingly, the ecstatic workplace is inviting, even homelike: it's "not just a place to work," says the online magazine *Ecompany*. "It's a place to live." Many companies now provide "nap tents" or "spent tents," with sleeping bags, pillows, alarm clocks, soothing music, and a supply of new toothbrushes. One New York media company has a booklined "womb room," with comfortable chairs and hardwood floors. A growing number of employers are hiring "convenience coordinators" or concierges, who locate specialty gifts, find a housekeeper, plan a Hawaiian vacation or a child's birthday party. In this spirit, some companies now call their human resources departments "People Offices," headed by "Chief People Officers," or CPOs. Some workers have substituted their co-workers for the family they no longer have time for: "I miss everyone when I go on vacation"; "TCS is my family," write two employees of The Container Store, Number One on *Fortune*'s list of Best Companies to Work For.

Ecstatic work, then, is not only personal—it's communal. This explains why, despite the predicted rise in "free agency," self-employment actually fell between 1994 and 1999, for the first five-year period since the 1960s. Instead of starting up in their own garages, millions of workers have joined existing businesses, most of them large companies with at least 1,000 employees. Why? According to the *New York Times*, "these workers say that a traditional office—despite all its problems—has become one of the last places to find a community."

It helps that companies provide all sorts of services that you used to have to drive to town to find: auto repair, dry cleaners, even "wellness centers," where you can have your blood pressure or cholesterol monitored. The SAS Institute in Cary, North Carolina, offers breast-cancer and single-parent support groups, as well as Bible study groups. Cutting-edge corporate design firms have set out to evoke the spirit of community by turning the workplace into a Disneyland office-village, made all the more appealing because it has none of the garbage, traffic, or (presumably) idiots you have to contend with in the real thing. The cubicles and offices at the TBWA/Chiat/Day advertising firm in Los Angeles, which one employee says is "like a big playground," line the "streets" feeding onto a "Main Street," which leads to a tree-lined "Central Park," where employees can sit in café chairs and sip coffee while they work. A company called Netp@rk is planning New Age office parks, where you could arrive in the morning, drop your baby off at the day-care center, your mother at the elder-care center, and Fido at the kennel. At your desk, you could log in to your computer and check on them at any time. You could also take a break and go for a swim in the company pool, jog on the company track, or hike along the company nature trail. When it comes to pass, Netp@rk will be the

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objective correlative of ecstatic capitalism, the total workplace that satisfies all your needs.

Ecstatic capitalism has bored so deeply into the national psyche that it has even changed how Americans think of childhood. For just as every day Mom goes off to work—as did 59 percent of women with babies under one year old in 1998, vs. 31 percent in 1976—and Dad goes off to work, so baby . . . well, goes to work. While a generation ago, experts saw infancy as a time to develop healthy emotional attachments, contemporary parenting magazines and advice books are obsessed with "learning" or what *Newsweek* has called "building baby's brain," presumably for the demands of knowledge work. According to the Toy Manufacturer's Association of America, while sales of traditional infant and toddler toys have remained flat, technology-driven "learning toys," a category that didn't even exist 25 years ago, have taken off. Growing in popularity are software programs, like "Jumpstart Baby," that come with a BabyBall—an oversize, drool-proof computer mouse for infants as young as nine months.

"Work is now the arena where the true self can blossom; private life makes us inauthentic."

After a lesson-packed infancy, the new-economy baby must begin school as early as possible. One New York City foreign-language program starts babies at six months—before they can talk—and public pressure is mounting for universal preschool for three- and four-year-olds. For today's five-year-old, a full day's work is mandatory: "No Time for Napping in Today's Kindergarten," proclaims a recent *New York Times* article. One Seneca Falls mother of seven was startled when her youngest child, during her first week of kindergarten, studied the parts of bees and was asked to keep a journal. She shook her head in amazement at the change from when her older children tearfully left the nest: "Never mind the mother-child separation; it's get to work!"

The new-economy grade-schooler also has no time for childish nonsense. Many districts have jettisoned gym and even recess. During the summer, kids go to computer camps, language immersion schools, and enrichment programs: for, as parenting magazines warn, LEARNING TAKES NO VACATION. Tutoring centers like Sylvan Centers and Score! have become the after-school and summer homes of a growing number of children on the move. (Score!'s CEO, Jeff Colon, has said his centers are most popular in the Bay Area, where parents are especially tuned in to the demands of the knowledge economy.) Chicago parents can send their youngsters to the Children's Health and Executive Club, with its miniature stair-climbing machine equipped with Magna Doodles for developing eye-hand coordination (to improve a child's reading skills) and body balance (to improve math skills). The company's founder, who has recently added a 7 AM breakfast club, promises to develop a "positive child, motivated to excel."

Most striking are the children who have absorbed the lessons of ecstatic capitalism so precociously that they are leaping past such jejune concerns as baseball and homework—and even school itself—to go straight to work. James U. McNeal, the country's leading researcher on children's consumption habits, says that younger and younger kids are making money mowing the lawn, cooking meals, and babysitting, so that by 1997 the typical ten-year-old had close to $14 in weekly spending money, a 75-percent increase over 1991. The *Dallas Morning News* reports a new breed of child entrepreneur, outfitted with business cards, credit cards, beepers, cell phones, and Palm Vs. Some of these young workers are in the old-fashioned lawn-cutting business, but others have spied a market for video-rental delivery and the like; still others, according to the article, are just "networking." They may well have gotten advice from one of an emerging genre of child business books like *Making Cents: Every Kid's Guide to Money* or *Girls and Young Women Entrepreneurs: True Stories About Starting and Running a Business*.

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As for adolescents, nearly 18 percent of older teens are working at least 20 hours per week during the school year, according to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a record number that far exceeds teen working hours in other industrialized countries. Most working teens serve pizza and Big Macs, but more and more troubleshoot computers for $50 an hour, money that they then use to trade stocks over the Internet. Some of these techies simply forgo college, a trend that may partly explain the decline in high school grads attending college from 67 percent in 1997 to 63 percent in 1999. The *New York Times* reported that one such high school senior, earning "between $30,000 and $40,000" a year, had just made an offer on a $136,000 house near his hometown of Tiffin, Ohio. Says a Missouri 20-year-old who went straight to Silicon Valley after high school graduation and who now makes $50,000 a year and boasts of his $350,000 in stock options: "In this field, if you go to college, you're outdated."

Only the most curmudgeonly technophobe could fail to be impressed by the staggering amount of motivation, verve, and youthful energy that the new economy has unleashed. But you could forgive him for reminding us of the costs of its novel religion, for all its advantages. To begin with the most obvious, even if work today more nearly approximates play than it has in the past, it can never achieve the non-utilitarian randomness, the release, the freely chosen quality of play. Inevitably, 24/7 work ties us in knots; check out the number of *Fast Company* articles on stress, along with desktop "calming pools" for sale at department stores and the demand for corporate massage therapists.

Stress among workamaniac teens has become a theme in newspaper living sections. One *New York Times*–CBS News survey found that affluent teenagers were more likely than their less wealthy peers to complain of stress and, amazingly, to believe that their lives are harder than their parents' lives had been. A senior from St. Louis interviewed in *Time* gets up at 5 AM for track practice after only six hours of sleep. After a full day of school and play rehearsal, she comes home to three hours of homework. She doesn't date—"I just don't have the time"—and like many kids her age keeps a day planner to try to pencil in an hour here or there to see friends. More disturbing is how, as child development becomes the equivalent of career training, and as work success becomes the one agreed-upon parental goal, this pressure is passed on to young children: "Failing at Four" goes the pathetic title of one *New York* magazine article. Two years ago, the hour a week my daughter's fifth-grade class gives over to personal issues began not with warnings about drugs or hormonal changes but advice about how to handle stress.

Like most religions, ecstatic capitalism can be a totalizing system, and it cannot make sense of those things that do not fit its orthodoxy, especially domestic life. True, many companies now offer flextime and at-home Internet connections whose avowed purpose is to ease work-family tensions. But let's face it: the ultimate goal of these perks is to lower employee stress levels only so they can work more efficiently. In a profile in *The New Yorker*, Larissa MacFarquhar quotes Michael Saylor, head of MicroStrategy, as he pitches his company to a group of new recruits. "'Who are we competing with in order to capture your hearts and minds? . . . Other software companies? Other employers? What else?' He paused. No one could think of any other answer. 'Anything else you could do with your time,' came Saylor's response. 'You could stay at home, raise the kids, go to college, write the Great American Novel, or slit your wrists and end it all. . . . My job is to make sure that I'm providing you with a combination of economic, psychic, and emotional benefits that makes working for MicroStrategy better than anything else you can do.'" In other words, the company does not simply offer a womb room; it wants to be your mother—and, for that matter, your wife.

But by playing wife and mother, ecstatic capitalism inevitably devalues those intimate relationships. When companies take care of preparing meals or buying a birthday gift for a spouse, they drain those activities of personal meaning. They cast cooking dinner for the family or planning a birthday party as nuisances, of no more significance or pleasure than a trip to Midas Muffler. Sparks.com perfectly exemplifies this tendency. Founder Felicia Lindau, driving home from work

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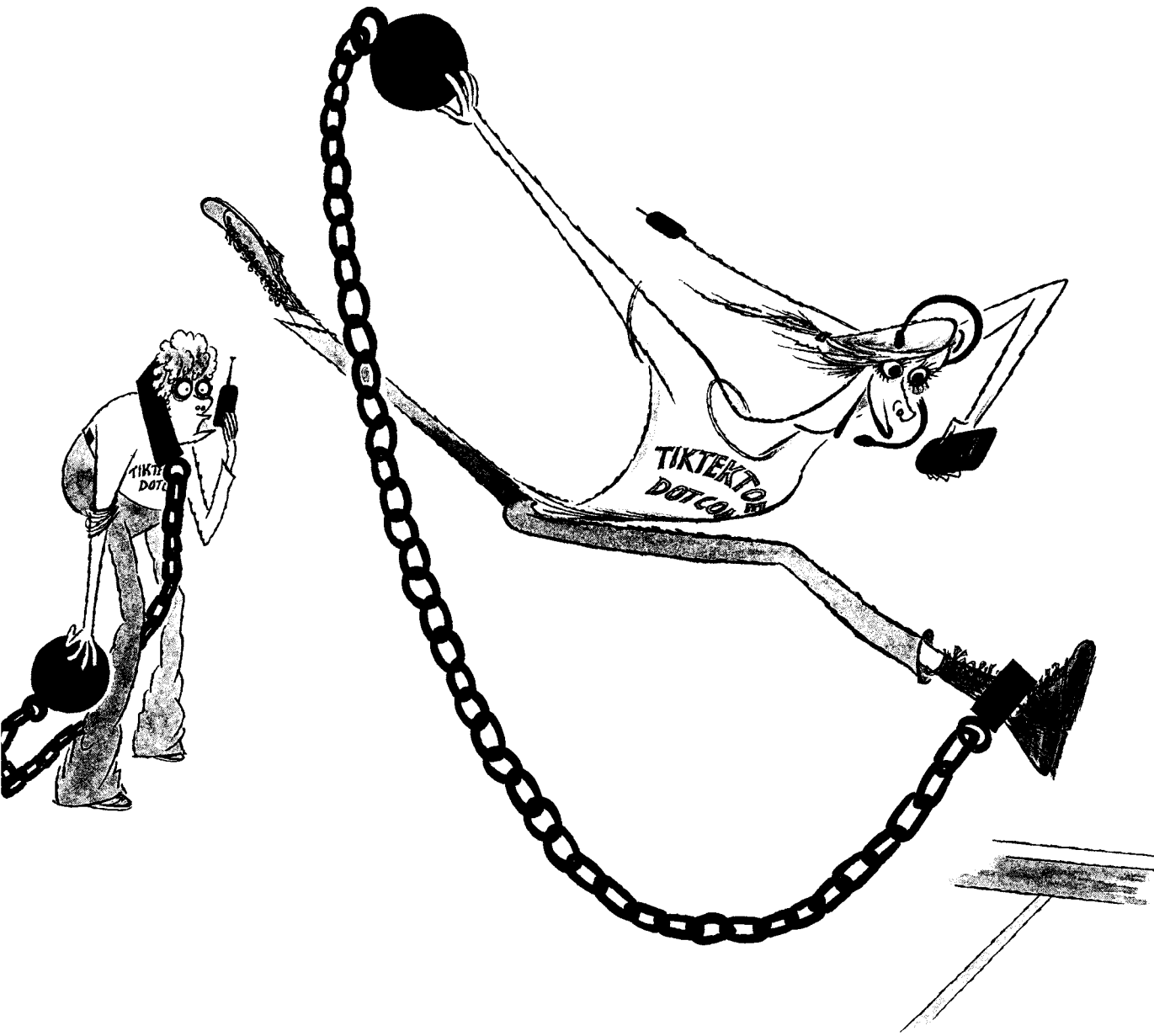

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one day in 1997, remembered that the next day was her mother's birthday. It was too late to buy a card, but not too late to turn her carelessness into a business idea: a company where you can buy greeting cards 24/7. Better yet, a company that could "manage all of your relationships," as Sparks's website puts it: give them a list of cards you want sent for the next year, and they'll take care of each of them on the proper day. You don't have to give your mother's birthday another thought!

As the total workplace satisfies more and more of our needs that were once met elsewhere, family life takes on what Arlie Hochschild calls an "industrial tone." Playfulness and communal good feeling may be prominent in the office, but at home, time-defined tasks dominate. With Megan's tutoring session over at 5 and her ballet class beginning at 5:15, leaving 15 minutes for dinner before Josh's basketball practice starts, you half expect some families to adopt the bells or sirens used in early factories. "We're very, very busy people," says a husband and father interviewed in *Father Courage*, a recent study of fathers who share domestic duties with their wives. "We've had to structure [family life] like a business."

For the clearest insight into how ecstatic capitalism has sucked its energy from personal and emotional life, consider the mind-set of the late adolescents and young adults who have grown up in such homes. Their youthful idealism looks familiar enough, but they have transferred that idealism from Big Questions about Life and Love to Career. The Higher Education Research Institute, which has tracked campus attitudes over 30 years, has found that, while in the late 1960s students saw their college years as "a time to develop a meaningful philosophy of life," today they see it as a time to develop their earnings potential. Ben Lieber, dean of students at Amherst College, agrees: "There's one word to describe this generation—driven," he says. "You used to see this among first-generation college students. But over the past five or six years, more and more kids with college-educated parents are looking over their shoulders, 'Who's doing better than I?' There's a pervasive, underlying worry about credentials." "You have the feeling that the days of college as a broad and open-ended contemplation have come to an end," says Oberlin dean of students Peter Goldsmith.

Jason Mondberg, the ponytailed, skateboarding CTO of Sparks.com, certainly has no time for such nonsense. "I'm very goal-oriented," he says. "On days off, I always schedule my day. This hour I'll go on a hike, then go snorkeling. I can't lie on a beach." An article in *Fast Company* entitled "Five Ways to Chill; Five Tips to Keep Your Adrenaline Levels From Maxing Out" perfectly captures the current mood; the number-one tip, evidently unknown to this generation of working stiffs, is "Look Out the Window."

Thus for the young ecstatic capitalist work is not work, but then leisure is not leisure. And since ecstatic capitalism seems to recognize only one passion, love is not exactly love. University of Chicago professors Amy and Leon Kass frequently ask their students, "What is the most important decision you will make in your life?" The answer is almost invariably "career." When one nonconforming student answered, "the mother of my children," his classmates howled with derision. The casual, no-strings, one-night stand known as "the hook-up" now so common on college campuses could be labeled Sex That Won't Interfere with Your Career Plans. Yale junior Simon Rodberg, in an article entitled "Woman and Man at Yale," describes the hook-up as "a much needed break from the long-term planning that characterizes so much of our lives." Some of this is a simple matter of the laws of physics. If you are planning a summer internship in New York or law school in Chicago, what do you do with a boyfriend who's joining a start-up in L.A.? Moreover, once students graduate into the real world, the spirit of jokey conviviality that rules at the workplace doesn't necessarily lend itself to deeper involvements. "It's like working at a junior prom all year long," Sparks.com's Allison Behr explained. "But at the end of the day, all of us want a more a traditional relationship. There's no time."

Combined with career mania, this time crunch has the effect of suppressing spontaneous human contact, the sort that sometimes leads to unforeseen friendships or romances, and it turns even the young into rigorous, even brutal, prag-

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matists. When you have a career to pursue, an identity to brand, and a watch to check, someone better have a pretty fancy pedigree to merit your attention. "Everyone is so motivated and so into control that it's very hard to find someone you think is worth investing time, energy, and sensibility in," as a junior from Oakland told Yale student Rodberg.

The Nondisclosure Agreement, a legal document once used by lawyers and CEOs to protect corporate secrets during high-level negotiations and now popular among ambitious young entrepreneurs, is a perfect symbol of the toughening of intimate life. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, some of these young turks are demanding that their friends, roommates, relatives, dinner-party companions, and even their clergymen and fiancées sign on the dotted line, to ensure that if one of them does babble on about his new venture, at least he can sue them for damages. As one consultant told the *Journal*, "It's one of the critical items for a date: car keys, credit cards, condoms, and an NDA."

"The one-night stand known as the 'hook-up' could be labeled Sex That Won't Interfere with Your Career."

Still, ecstatic capitalism does not preclude happy endings, especially those in its own image. Take the recent *New York Times* wedding announcement of Seth Copeland, chief executive of Wideband Computers and Wideband Semiconductors, and clinical psychology student Stephanie Cantor. The bridegroom said he was attracted to his bride's "cognitive, logical skills," while the bride called theirs a typical Silicon Valley courtship: "The trend is get engaged during lunch and go back to work."

Inevitably, because of the way it colonizes all of life, ecstatic capitalism is bound to suffer some kind of backlash, perhaps during the next downturn. A 1999 *Fast Company* survey showed 91 percent of its respondents believing that it was important to make personal life more of a priority (though 83 percent would choose a $10,000 a year raise over one more hour a day at home). We're beginning to hear stories of career-driven 30-year-olds retiring and doing good works in what the *New York Times* has dubbed a "young-life crisis."

The most intense resistance comes from women who, despite the promises of careerist feminism, remain reluctant to surrender so many of their personal urges to the promises of ecstatic work. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Nancy Ann Jeffrey found that many married upper-income women are quitting work and moving back into Friedan's "comfortable concentration camp" of domestic life. Though the number of single-income households has remained steady overall, the proportion has "moved up considerably" among those earning $250,000 or more. Younger women too show signs that they are resisting work's greedy grasp. An Arthur Andersen survey found that teen girls say they'd prefer careers in small business and public service in order to maintain independence. Yalie Rodberg quotes one high school senior girl from Towson, Maryland: "It's funny how many girls are saying, 'You know, I just want to be a housewife now.'" Lisa Belkin, a *New York Times* reporter covering the work-family beat, wrote of how once during a business trip she sang a lullaby to her two young boys from a telephone bank at the Atlanta airport; the women making calls on both sides of her wept. Some human longings, it seems, resist being cubiclized.

Still, like it or not, for the time being ecstatic capitalism—even when it is less than fully ecstatic—is likely to remain powerful. My boyfriend—now my husband—and I have two children about the age we were when we set out in his Ford Falcon on our spiritual quest to San Francisco. Both of them work hours that would have made us think that they are living on a different planet, which in a sense they are. Meanwhile, their younger sister, a seventh-grader who rides her scooter to school and still dreams of her Halloween candy, shows little interest in boys—but she is starting to plan her SAT strategy.

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How to Run the Mob Out of Gotham

Steven Malanga

For 100 years, organized crime, working through corrupt unions, has levied a huge tax on New York's economy. Now prosecutors and pols are learning how to fight back.

One of the worst consequences of New York's long love affair with the labor unions has been the power it has given to organized crime. For decades, the mob, working through corrupt unions, has infiltrated whole swathes of Gotham's economy—everything from the garment industry to garbage carting to construction—while timid politicians, fearful of losing union support, have determinedly looked the other way. As a result, the wise guys have levied a steep mob tax on the city—enforced by intimidation, violence, even murder—that has added billions of dollars to the already high cost of doing business in New York.

Recently, criminologists have proclaimed that organized crime is dead in Gotham. This report is, emphatically, premature. True, over the last decade, prosecutors have at last begun to figure out how to break the mob's hold; they have thrown some big racketeers in jail and forcibly injected economic competition into mobbed-up industries. What's more, both Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Governor George Pataki have shown a lot more backbone in fighting gangsters than their predecessors and have gotten real results. But recent indictments in the construction industry are a stark reminder that the mob's costly, malignant influence persists, so that prosecutors must intensify their efforts to clean up mob-corrupted markets and politicians must be willing to legislate changes that make industries less liable to mob influence. It will take unflagging political will to get the job done.

The mob's control of labor unions, which gives it power over New York's economic life, goes back to the 1920s, when unions, their members mostly Jewish and Italian immigrants, turned to street gangs to provide muscle against strikebreakers and rival workers' groups. These petty immigrant gangs took advantage of Prohibition's vast opportunities for bootlegging to build themselves into larger, more organized crime groups with their own system for divvying up criminal markets. With Prohibition's end in 1933, these gangs—forerunners of the five families that dominated organized crime in the city for much of the twentieth century—changed their relation to organized labor: they moved beyond breaking kneecaps for union bosses to taking control of big unions themselves.

The crime families' command over labor unions gave them the power to shake down company bosses who sought to buy labor peace or an exemption from onerous union work rules or merely the assurance that their jobs would get done on time. As Genovese crime soldier Vincent "Fish" Cafaro told prosecutors in 1988: "With the unions behind us, we could shut down the city, or the country, for that matter, if we needed to get our way. . . . We got power over every businessman in New York. With the unions behind us, we could make or break the construction industry, the garment business, to name a few." Worse, power over the

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A carting company owned by Angelo Ponte (above), part of a mob-dominated cartel that controlled private sanitation in New York City, picked up trash at 55 Water Street (top) for a hefty fee of $100,000 a month. An NYPD undercover cop (right), posing as the building's manager, received bribes from Ponte's son, leading to indictments that helped break the mob's hold on the industry and open the market to competitors (center).

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unions gave the mobsters leverage to gain hidden ownership of companies and power over employer associations, creating cartels that have controlled entire industries within the city. "Every industry I've ever seen the mob take control of started with their influence in the union," says Daniel Castelman, chief of investigations for Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau.

The saga of New York's garment district shows exactly how the mob and the unions first became symbiotic, how the wise guys typically use corrupt unions to take over an industry, and how prosecutors, after decades of ineffectiveness, at last learned how to fight back.

In the early 1920s, the United Hebrew Trades union asked Lepke Buchalter and his Jewish and Italian gangster pals from Brooklyn to work as union enforcers. Buchalter deployed 250 toughs, who threatened owners and threw acid on the merchandise of companies that dared buck the union. Sometimes, his troops squared off with those of another Jewish gangster, Dutch Schultz, who broke strikes for the garment bosses. Occasionally, the two hoodlums would work both sides of a strike for mutual benefit. Buchalter also struck up an alliance with Sidney Hillman, legendary founder of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union that represented 50,000 garment industry laborers and a close advisor to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Working for Hillman, Buchalter battled company goons and fought to keep Communists from taking over the union.

But the ambitious Buchalter wasn't content merely with being hired union muscle. Grasping how the industry functioned, he launched a plan to control it. The business, he realized, couldn't operate without the 1,900 workers who cut the cloth and shipped the goods. If you had the power to withhold their labor at will, you'd have leverage over the entire industry.

By the early 1930s, Buchalter had persuaded the Amalgamated cutters' local to align with him by offering their officials protection from rival union forces, and he managed to get the drivers behind him, too. In exchange for labor peace—he could now shut down business with a word—Buchalter coerced the garment companies into doling out sweetheart contracts to trucking firms that gave him kickbacks. News accounts from the thirties estimate that, at the height of their power, he and his crew took home $5–10 million yearly from these criminal enterprises—$50–100 million in today's dollars. Buchalter died in the electric chair in 1944 for the murder of a trucker, detailing his links to Hillman and the Amalgamated before he went to the chair. But neither the union nor Hillman ever faced charges, some said because of the union leader's close ties to FDR. Meanwhile, Buchalter's garment-district rackets went to his associate, Albert Anastasia, chief executioner of Murder Inc., the murder-for-hire organization that evolved out of their old street gang.

It took Carlo Gambino, who assumed control of the garment district in 1957, after a mob hit at a Manhattan barbershop had rubbed out Anastasia, to transform what was a mob-influenced industry into a full-fledged organized crime cartel. He and his family used their control of the unions to take over the trucking companies that serviced the garment district, so that few manufacturers could get a delivery or make a shipment without their say-so.

Already in the early 1950s, Carlo had set up his son Joseph as a minor partner in Consolidated Carriers Corporation, in exchange for giving that firm a union-friendly edge on the competition, and son Thomas joined later. As other Consolidated partners retired, the Gambinos became owners of what had become the district's most important trucking company, and they acquired interests in other trucking firms, sometimes partnering with rival crime families like the Luccheses. By the mid-1980s, operating 90 percent of the trucks that serviced the garment district, the mob held the industry in a vice-like grip. In the early 1990s, to take just one example, a production manager for fashion designer Nicole Miller testified that once, when he tried to use a small gypsy trucker, trench-coated mob goons showed up and stood around menacingly, hands in pockets, until the frightened independent operator fled. District kingpin Thomas Gambino, honored as the garment industry's Man of the Year at a 1981 dinner at the Plaza Hotel, grew extremely rich: by 1992, investigators estimated his personal wealth at $75 million.

But the $2.5 billion garment industry suffered. Records from the early 1990s showed that mob trucking companies generated yearly revenues of about $50 million and operating profits of $22 million, a

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hefty 44 percent profit margin, compared with the 10 to 15 percent margins that typical city truckers averaged. The added costs that mob trucking imposed, in other words, amounted to $15–17 million yearly. The estimated mob tax on the district as a whole—if you include extortion, double billing, and other illegal activities—was a staggering $60 million a year by the early 1990s. Combined with New York's inflated legitimate taxes, it accelerated the flight of garment jobs from the city. From the mid-1950s, when the Gambinos took over the garment district, until 1992, the business shrank 75 percent, costing New York 225,000 jobs. The mob helped bump off a once vibrant industry.

"The estimated mob tax on the garment district was a staggering $60 million a year by the 1990s."

Where were the cops? you might ask. They kept jailing foot soldiers one by one, only to see others immediately take their places, leaving the mob's infrastructure intact. But beginning in the late 1980s, prosecutors worked out a way to cripple that infrastructure in the garment district and elsewhere. First, they fostered competition in mobbed-up industries, by using existing antitrust laws aggressively and protecting competitors brave enough to risk the mob's wrath. Second, after a seven-year fight, they persuaded the state legislature to pass the Organized Crime Control Act (OCCA), which expanded their power to charge mobsters for criminal conspiracy, letting them reach beyond the union functionaries and leg breakers to snare the kingpins. Finally, after these new weapons had broken open a mob cartel, they kept up the pressure to prevent the wise guys from coming back.

Key to bringing down the Gambinos was Manhattan D.A. Robert Morgenthau. He'd been trying to boot the gangsters out of the apparel industry ever since the early sixties, when, as a federal prosecutor, he had approached David Dubinsky of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and asked for help in an investigation of the district. Dubinsky said no. "He told me that he would only help if Bobby Kennedy asked, but when I got Kennedy to ask, he still refused," remembers Morgenthau.

Twenty years later, now Manhattan D.A. and armed with OCCA, Morgenthau tried again, without union help. At midnight on Halloween 1989, his agents picked 13 locks and disabled two alarm systems to plant a bug in the Gambino offices. The bug caught Thomas and Joseph Gambino bluntly describing how they'd carved up the market, how mob-owned trucking companies allocated customers, and how threats kept competitors out.

Meanwhile, Morgenthau's investigators also bought a small apparel company, Chrystie Fashions, for $10,000 and staffed it with undercover cops who tried to get a rise out of the Gambinos by replacing them as the firm's truckers. The ruse worked: a Gambino "salesman" made a call to a Chrystie's client from a bugged phone, telling him that he shouldn't ship anything to the firm unless it went via a Gambino truck—if he knew what was good for him.

In October 1990, Morgenthau indicted the Gambinos under OCCA, also charging them with antitrust violations. When agents arrested the Gambinos, they ostentatiously ripped the bug from the ceiling as the mobsters watched.

In the city's first major win against the mob, the D.A. reached an innovative deal with the Gambinos: in exchange for not going to jail, they agreed to get out of the business and pay $12 million to fund a special monitor to oversee the industry for five years and sell off mobbed-up companies. It took almost two years for garment-district companies to believe that the mob was really gone and that they could sign up with new truckers without fearing reprisal. Soon, some 75 independent truckers, many of them enterprising ethnic Chinese, flooded into the district. The cost of shipping dropped from 40 cents a garment to 15 cents.

The prosecutors' new approach has had its most important success in garbage carting, a huge, citywide, $1 billion-a-year industry in the early 1990s, serving fully 250,000 establishments, from the

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Empire State Building to Jerry's Sub Shop. Organized crime seized control of the industry in the late fifties, after taking over the private garbage workers' union. The mob cartel charged customers the highest price allowed by the city's Department of Consumer Affairs (which nominally was supposed to be supervising the industry), and then the mobbed-up carting companies gilded the lily further by overstating how much trash they picked up from a client—by 40 to 50 percent. The wise guys enforced their rule with ruthless brutality: in one notorious instance, the Lucchese family murdered two rebel Long Island carters in 1989.

A fearless, heavyweight national carting firm proved the key to breaking the cartel. In January 1993, Houston-based Browning-Ferris Industries began to solicit New York customers; in February, a BFI supervisor awoke one morning at his new home in suburban New City, New York, to find a bag on his lawn, containing a severed dog's head. A message taped inside its mouth read: "Welcome to New York."

BFI soon discovered that the mob was operating with near impunity in the garbage industry. Despite the warnings of his Consumer Affairs commissioner, Mayor David Dinkins showed little enthusiasm in taking on the cartel, and the city's establishment had reconciled itself to permanent mob control of garbage collection, as BFI head William Ruckelshaus (a former FBI chief and deputy attorney general of the United States) discovered in a meeting with members of the *New York Times* editorial board. During the meeting, a *Times* editor naively asked: "Who picks up *our* garbage?" After a few snickers, a less clueless editor enlightened him: the mob. "That was the problem," says Ruckelshaus. "The financial capital of the world was being shaken down, and no one would do anything about it"—including the nation's newspaper of record and self-proclaimed champion of good government. "That breeds cynicism."

And New York businesses were deeply cynical. Few showed interest in BFI: why risk it? An executive at Tishman-Speyer, a big owner of Manhattan office towers, began a meeting with BFI sales representatives by relating how developer Harry Helmsley once hired his own people to collect garbage at buildings he owned, only to have his trucks burned. "After he finished the story," recalls Phillip Angell, former special assistant to Ruckelshaus, "he told us the company was satisfied with its carting contract, and that was the end of the meeting."

So BFI turned to prosecutor Morgenthau, who, having just busted the garment-district mob, had begun to investigate the garbage carters. In June 1993, Ruckelshaus and Morgenthau crafted a plan for BFI to work undercover to help nail the carting cartel.

Morgenthau already had a cop working undercover as the manager of 55 Water Street, a financial-district building owned by Alabama Retirement Systems, whose head was the D.A.'s friend. The undercover officer, calling himself Paul Vassil, managed a staff of 34 building workers. Wearing new suits that the D.A.'s office had bought for him from discounter Moe Ginsburg, Vassil set out to become known in New York's real-estate world. He got newspapers to quote him as a real-estate expert, negotiated with real-estate brokers on tenant leases, and lunched with Angelo and Vincent Ponte, who controlled the carting company that served the building. (Subsequently, "Vassil" left the NYPD and became a real-life building manager.)

Playing his role to the hilt, Vassil told the Pontes that his boss wanted him to cut costs, so he'd have to put the carting contract up for bid. Prosecutors then brought in BFI to make an offer but didn't tell the firm that 55 Water was currently paying a whopping $100,000 a month to have its recyclable paper hauled away. BFI concluded that it could profitably serve the building for about $120,000 *a year*. To keep the contract, carting boss Vincent Ponte paid Vassil a series of bribes cumulatively worth $10,000. Ponte also asked Vassil if he could see the lowest bid in order to beat it—in violation of antitrust law.

Slowly, BFI began landing a few contracts from recession-squeezed businesses. The Hotel Inter-Continental on Lexington Avenue, pressed by corporate bosses to cut its $15,000 monthly carting cost, signed on after BFI bid 40 percent less. Restaurateur Alan Stillman, whose chain includes Smith & Wollensky and Cité, asked BFI to audit his garbage bills and learned that carters were charging him for 40 percent more garbage than they were picking up. He too signed on with the Houston company.

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Union leader Joseph "Socks" Lanza (below), a lieutenant in the Genovese crime family, controlled the Fulton Fish Market (top) for more than 40 years. After Mayor Giuliani and Deputy Mayor Randy Mastro (far right) proposed legislation to rid the market of the mob, arsonists burned down one of Fulton's buildings (above), and eventually the city hired an outside contractor to replace mob-backed companies at the market.

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The mob began to harass BFI's operations, sending trucks to pick up garbage at BFI's new clients before the company's own trucks arrived and then bringing the garbage back—earning clients city fines. In a scene right out of *The Sopranos*, a tail followed a BFI truck out of the Lincoln Tunnel one evening and nearly ran it off the road in New Jersey. Morgenthau put police escorts on BFI trucks.

At times, the cartel's attempts to stop BFI bordered on the comical. In one taped conversation, mob bosses talked about buying BFI, not realizing that it was a Fortune 500 corporation with a market capitalization far beyond their reach (in 1999, Allied Waste purchased the company for $7.3 billion). Cartel reps sat down at the Waldorf Astoria's Bull & Bear restaurant with senior BFI managers, suggested that the firm was hurting its shareholders with low prices, and threatened a shareholder suit.

At this point, Morgenthau's undercover efforts, many undertaken with BFI's help, began to pay off. Bugs planted in carting-industry associations turned up further incriminating evidence. An undercover cop working at one of the few independent trucking companies in the city received mob bribes and threats. Morgenthau eventually had enough evidence to close in: in June 1995, he indicted the four mob-controlled carting groups, 17 individuals, and 23 companies for antitrust violations and for criminal conspiracy under OCCA.

Hoping to pry open the market further, Morgenthau then asked some of the city's biggest landlords to entertain BFI bids. Even with mob carters under indictment, many refused. Some even defended the carters. Prominent developer Lewis Rudin, founder of the Association for a Better New York, told *Fortune*: "I think they're making a mountain out of a molehill with these guys."

Recognizing that indictments alone were not enough, Mayor Rudy Giuliani proposed establishing a carting commission to oversee the industry: it would require background checks on carting companies and deny licenses to those with mob connections. After a bitter fight in the City Council—where some members, including Stephen DiBrienza from Brooklyn and Julia Harrison from Queens, accused the Giuliani administration of favoring outsiders like BFI over local businesses—the Council approved the plan. It denied many mobbed-up companies licenses, and other national carters joined BFI in bidding for New York contracts. Unfortunately, the Giuliani plan retained the government's right to set prices, limiting the free-market competition that helped break the cartel in the first place, and it set no cut-off date for the carting commission, leading to fears that it might become a permanent bureaucracy. "I would feel more comfortable if the commission would sunset at some point," admits former BFI executive Angell.

One thing that makes organized crime so difficult to eradicate is that the mob's close union connection keeps politicians—especially Democrats heavily dependent on union support—extremely hesitant to mess with it. New York's most spectacular illustrations of the truth of this proposition are the city-owned Fulton Fish Market and the state's Javits Convention Center.

Mob control of the Fulton Fish Market began in the 1920s, when a tough fish handler, Joseph "Socks" Lanza, organized the market's largely Italian immigrant workers into United Seafood Workers Local 359. Lanza insisted that only his workers could unload the ships that dropped off their daily catch on the docks, and he levied a $10 "union" fee on each ship for the service. He also charged market wholesalers up to $2,500 a year to keep labor peace.

Even after fish began to arrive not by ship but by truck from as far away as Florida, Lanza maintained his domination by controlling just a few hundred union workers and six loading and unloading companies. He brought in mob associates, including the Bonanno family and his ultimate successor Carmine Romano, to run several of the loading companies. Together they ruled the market as a fiefdom, even creating parking spaces on city property that the fish delivery trucks had to pay to use, putting an extra $250,000 a year into their pockets. In 1975, the union formed a protection association that charged wholesalers $1,300 a month to safeguard them from theft, though the mob itself did much of the stealing.

Despite these outrages, for decades the mob's domination of the market faced little resistance from city law enforcement, though federal prosecutors sometimes interfered. In the late seventies, the feds removed Lanza's successor Romano from the seafood union for shaking down wholesalers and

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enforcing a cartel, but Romano's handpicked candidate won the union presidency in an unsupervised election. In 1987, U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani filed a successful federal RICO suit against Local 359. A federal court appointed a new monitor for the union, but he had little control over other mob activity in the market.

These federal prosecutions failed to galvanize the Koch or Dinkins administrations into asserting control over Fulton. "The city was essentially an absentee landlord," says Randy Mastro, former deputy mayor under Giuliani, because, Mastro believes, neither Koch nor Dinkins believed that he could really succeed in driving out the crooks. "It was symptomatic of a mindset in New York by the early 1990s that saw certain problems as intractable," Mastro says. In 1992, then-U.S. Attorney Otto Obermaier ended the monitor's role at Local 359, pointedly observing that it was time for the city to take responsibility.

"Federal prosecutions failed to galvanize the Koch or Dinkins administrations into asserting control over Fulton."

It took a change of administrations for the city finally to step up to the plate. Soon after taking office in 1994, Rudy Giuliani charged Mastro with the task of kicking the mob out of Fulton. Mastro crafted legislation to allow the city to manage the market and ban union members with mob connections. The day after the administration announced the legislation, a market building went up in flames—presumably torched by the mob. The outrage that the arson provoked propelled the bill through the City Council—a rare case of anti-mob legislation meeting with little resistance. The Giuliani administration also evicted mob-owned wholesalers and ended the gangsters' grip on loading and unloading. In the mob's place, the administration installed Laro Maintenance, which won the contract after agreeing to charge $1.10 per each 100-pound box of fish that it unloaded, a 19 percent cut from the mob rate. The price for a parking spot to unload deliveries fell from $20 to $4.

A year after these changes, statistics from the National Marine Fisheries Service found that, while the wholesale price of fish nationwide rose 13 percent, the overall price of fish at Fulton fell 2 percent. The volume of fish coming into the market increased to 183 million pounds that year, up 32 percent since 1992. In other words, it had taken only a matter of months for the city to liberate the market, once it made up its mind to do so.

Incredibly, nobody cheered. Both the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice* asked whether the new administration was running the fish market with the same "ruthless efficiency," in the *Voice*'s phrase, as the mob had run it. These stories voiced a persistent, cynical New York belief: that the mob rationalizes complicated industries for businesses. But though the mob created an orderly transition at the fish market when boats gave way to trucks, consumers ended up paying higher prices. And there's a moral price paid when organized crime can operate freely and violently, and on government-owned property to boot. Says Ronald Goldstock, former head of the state's Organized Crime Task Force: "The mob tax can also be measured in a loss of freedom and democracy in institutions like unions, and in the cynicism it breeds in ordinary citizens and businesses, who see how things work and think that they, too, must cheat to succeed."

The failure of government to police the mob was even more disastrous at the state-owned Javits Center, where the gangsters engaged in stealing on an industrial scale.

The stealing started even before construction began in 1980. Thanks to a mob-ruled cartel, in which seven crooked concrete companies met every other week to divvy up bids on big public contracts, the state got only two bids for the concrete needed to build Javits, one for $30 million and one for $40 million, on a quantity whose free-market cost would have been an estimated $18 million. After a second call for bids produced only the same two offers, the state gave the contract to mobster Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno's S&A Concrete, sticking New York

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taxpayers with an extra $12 million cost (part of an estimated $40–50 million a year in overcharges that the New York State attorney general's office determined the concrete cartel reaped in the mid-1980s, largely on public works projects).

Corruption continued after Javits opened in 1986. A lethal mix of supine state officials and mobbed-up unions had produced contracts paying laborers, electricians, carpenters, and other workers double and sometimes triple what convention centers in Chicago, Atlanta, and other major cities paid. Equally absurd work rules required, for instance, that only electricians—at $80 an hour—could plug in lamps. Hiring practices reeked of corruption. In most unionized industries today, the employer controls hiring, and workers only join the union once the firm engages them. But a federal exemption allows (though it doesn't require) construction unions to run old-time "hiring halls," where the union hires workers, runs apprenticeship-training programs, and dispenses workers to companies—an enormous source of patronage and power, and, of course, the practice at Javits.

With the hiring hall's help, the mob turned Javits into a nest of cronyism. In 1995, investigators accused the head of the teamsters union at Javits of dishing out a host of center jobs (including some with $100,000-and-up salaries) to friends and relatives of gangsters. Many of the jobs were no-show.

Lawlessness and disorder were epidemic. Police estimated the center lost nearly $1 million a year in pilferage. In the loading dock, a giant, rat-infested trash heap rose where workers discarded their garbage. For fun, workers would take forklifts and drive them into the center's walls, leaving great gouges. "The inmates were in control of the asylum," says Robert Boyle, a former construction-industry executive who eventually received the assignment to clean up the center.

The Javits Center gained such a reputation for high costs and unruly workers that from 1992 to 1995 it didn't attract one new show. Its largest tenant, the New York Auto Show, threatened to leave.

Chalk up the mob's unopposed takeover of Javits to the extraordinary cowardice of Governor Mario Cuomo's administration. Mayor Koch alerted the state to widespread complaints about organized crime's influence at the center soon after it opened, but Cuomo did almost nothing, beyond holding a news conference. In 1991, he appointed his general counsel and longtime friend Fabian Palomino as Javits president. Four years later, a state audit accused Palomino of mismanaging the center, adding to its long list of woes.

Cuomo's passivity was sadly typical of Democratic officeholders, who, confronted with obvious union corruption, too often refuse to act for fear of alienating organized labor. Cuomo's apathy sent a dispiriting message to prosecutors. "The specter of being accused of union busting always hung over us when we pursued cases of the mob in unions," says Robert Castelli, a former investigator with the state's Organized Crime Task Force.

The turning point for Javits didn't come until Republican George Pataki became governor and appointed Boyle as president in 1995. An investigator from Morgenthau's office, Gerald McQueen, became the new inspector general. The new team took hiring away from the unions, fired lots of people, advertised for new workers, and started performing background checks on workers. The center also renegotiated contracts with the unions to eliminate onerous work rules. Many of the reforms, it turned out, required only simple administrative procedures.

But a Pataki bill that would have allowed the center's management to fingerprint prospective employees and check the prints against an FBI criminal database foundered in Albany, sunk by the Democratic-controlled State Assembly. Boyle accused Democrats of protecting the perpetually mobbed-up District Council of Carpenters, which had contributed heavily to the campaigns of state officials, including the Assembly Democrats' campaign committee. The following year, the Assembly passed a bill giving back the carpenters' union the right to control hiring, but fortunately the Republican-controlled State Senate blocked it.

The new team improved things dramatically. A state audit praised Javits's leadership in 1996, as costs dropped as much as 40 percent on some shows. The center, with revenues of $36 million in 1995, when it lost $1.6 million, recorded revenues of about $100 million in 2000, earning a $4 million profit. Just as at Fulton, all it took to get the mob out of Javits was political backbone.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: EDWARD HOLUB; KARJEAN NG; EDWARD HOLUB; BETTMAN/CORBIS

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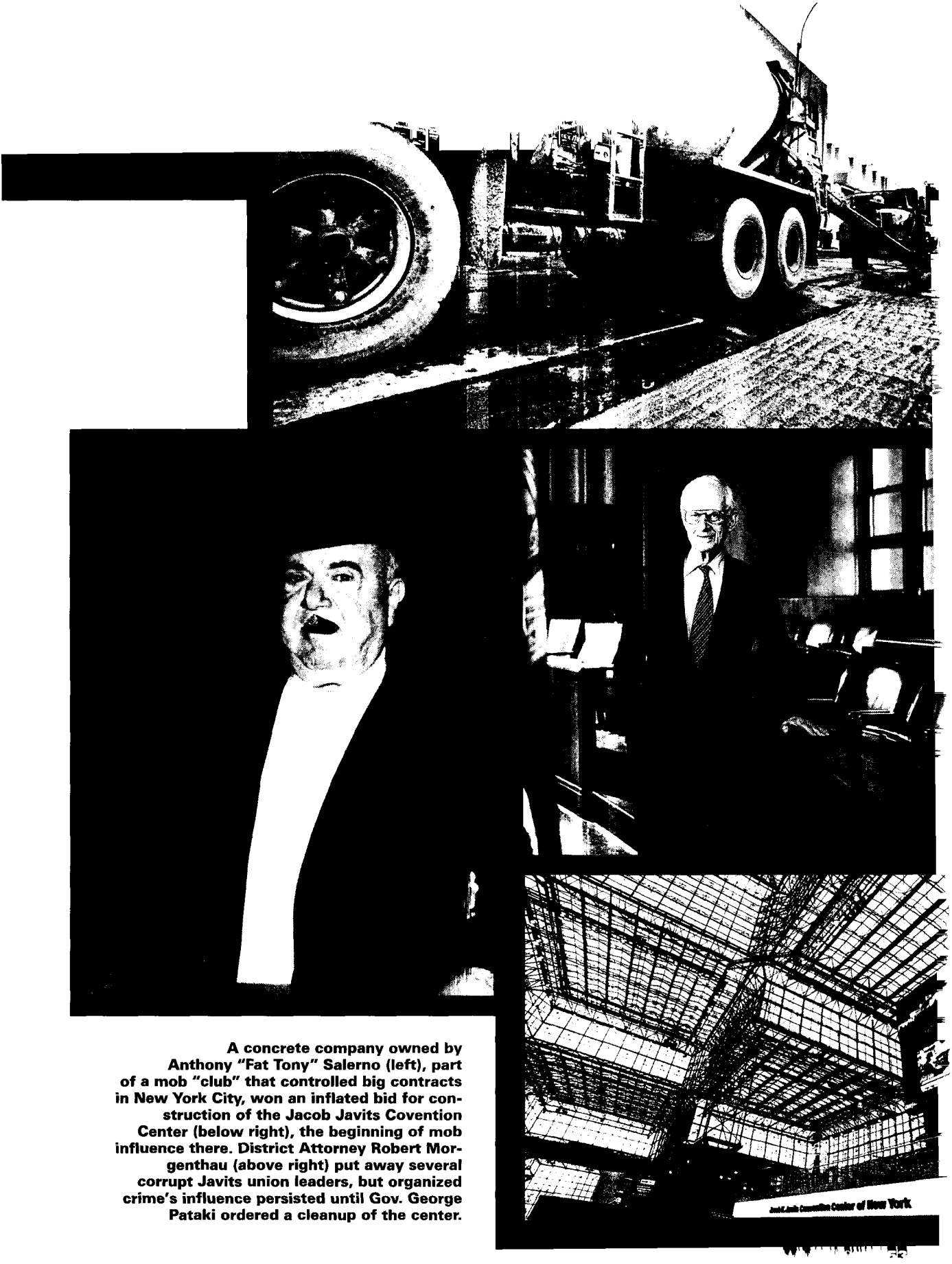

A concrete company owned by Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno (left), part of a mob "club" that controlled big contracts in New York City, won an inflated bid for construction of the Jacob Javits Covention Center (below right), the beginning of mob influence there. District Attorney Robert Morgenthau (above right) put away several corrupt Javits union leaders, but organized crime's influence persisted until Gov. George Pataki ordered a cleanup of the center.

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Even after being kicked out of the garment district, garbage carting, the fish market, and the Javits Center, the mob remains a strong presence in New York. It looms large in the city's huge, $25 billion construction industry, adding hundreds of millions of dollars a year to the already sky-high cost of building in the city. Just this September, the Manhattan D.A. brought a series of new indictments against the Lucchese crime family for bid rigging and bribery in construction contracts. Also indicted: the latest head of the District Council of Carpenters, the third council president since 1980 to have charges brought against him.

Corruption in New York's construction industry goes back at least 100 years—when United Brotherhood of Joiners boss Robert Brindell gained control of all the construction unions and made a cynical deal with the Building Trades Employers' Association that drove independent contractors out of town and tripled or even quadrupled construction prices in the city. But New York's five big crime families have had a lock on many of the main construction unions since the 1920s. By the 1980s, the state's Organized Crime Task Force observed, mobbed-up unions gave the wise guys a grip on numerous facets of construction, including transportation, cement and concrete work, masonry, painting, carpentry, and plumbing. Prosecutors estimated that the mob controlled 16 of the 31 unions representing general laborers. In the familiar pattern, the mobsters used their influence in unions to obtain interests in companies and to create cartels in the concrete, drywall, painting, and plumbing businesses.

A mob cartel's ability to control the flow of workers through a corrupt union's hiring hall allows it to scare off potential competitors without even resorting to real strong-arm stuff, as Lucchese crime soldier Salvatore Avellino explained in a secretly recorded conversation: "We gotta have the [union] strength, so when a f–ker comes along and bids on a contract that is supposed to be limited to members of the family, tomorrow he's got four Gold Tooths [Lucchese strong men] in front of him saying, 'Now that you have the contract, where are the workers?' That's the power."

Mob-controlled unions have extracted large concessions and extraordinary work rules in negotiations with timid construction-contractor associations. These rules often serve as a means to extort payments from businesses. Throughout the 1980s, for example, the master contract between the painters' union and its contractors' association in New York City stipulated that contractors could only use paintbrushes on jobs, even though spray guns and rollers would be more efficient. Wiretapped conversations of union officials showed that the absurd rule was simply a tool for shaking down contractors who wanted workers to be able to use spray guns or rollers. "It's clear that some work rules are just negotiated by unions as a way of encouraging bribery," says prosecutor Morgenthau.

On a big, unionized construction project, the mob tax, extorted principally from subcontractors, could be huge. The painters' unions and carpenters' unions, under Lucchese crime family control, extracted a hefty 10 percent tax on contracts. Drywall contractors paid a 2 percent mob tax. Every window installed on public projects and on private unionized projects required until 1991 a $1 or $2 mob charge. In the mid-1980s, when mob control of sectors of the industry was at its height, the tax often totaled 5 percent of a major project. These days, say prosecutors, even if the mob tax is 1 or 2 percent, that still amounts to $250–500 million yearly added to the cost of building in the city.

Though the construction industry is an easy mob target—work is seasonal and goes in boom and bust cycles, so contractors often feel compelled to get jobs done at any cost, even if it includes payoffs to get around union work rules or government requirements—excessive government regulation has made the business even more susceptible to mob influence. The city's labyrinthine building regulations discourage big national construction companies, who'd have the heft to resist mob takeover attempts, from competing in the city for building contracts. It's just too difficult for outsiders to get permission to build.

In addition, New York State's prevailing wage law, which requires that municipalities pay workers union wages on all public building projects, fosters mob corruption. The law creates an incentive for mobsters and contractors to enter into illegal agreements to evade it. In last September's indictments, prosecutors charged members of the Lucch-

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ese crime family and their union associates with extorting payoffs from contractors on government jobs—among them, three School Construction Authority contracts worth in total $32 million—in exchange for letting the companies get around the prevailing wage laws.

Even worse is the state's 80-year-old Wicks Law. Wicks requires government agencies to issue four separate contracts—for plumbing, electrical work, heating and ventilation, and the actual building of roofs and walls—for every government building project costing over $50,000, instead of bidding the job to one major contractor who could use its market leverage and expertise to enlist smaller subcontractors at favorable prices and supervise their work carefully. By multiplying the number of small contractors—98 percent of New York City's 10,000 construction firms employ fewer than 100 people—Wicks makes the bidding process harder to police. Moreover, the smaller firms have little power to resist the mob, and their employer associations, which negotiate union contracts, are invariably weak.

"Excessive government regulation has made the construction industry more susceptible to the mob."

Using RICO suits and trusteeships, prosecutors have wrested control from mobbed-up unions representing concrete workers, masons, and painters. They have seized companies run by mobsters in the drywall, window-replacement, and painting industries to bust up cartels. But if the mob's influence has diminished, recent indictments make clear that it hasn't disappeared.

With such problems in mind, Mayor Giuliani proposed legislation in 1998 to extend the structural reforms in carting to construction by forming a commission to perform background checks on companies and deny licenses based on associations with organized crime figures. The administration also demanded that companies with questionable records hire certified auditors to vet their integrity.

Builders, union officials, and developers reacted angrily and used their influence to keep the law stuck in the City Council's finance committee. But now that the recent indictments have given renewed urgency to calls for reform, members of the Building Trades Employers' Association, to head off tougher reforms, have begun discussing industry self-regulation, including background checks and licensing, says chairman Louis Coletti. In formulating its counterproposals, the industry clearly has emphasized its own interests over the public's. The employers' organization has urged more funding for inspectors to ensure compliance with prevailing-wage laws—a popular item with unionized contractors, because it keeps out non-union bidders.

With his term running out, Giuliani is unlikely to get his current version of the commission bill passed. But without structural reform, the construction industry is certain to remain highly vulnerable to corruption.

Some changes are obvious. New York should junk the Wicks Law, which serves only to protect union jobs without regard to the integrity of the industry or to the cost to municipalities. The state's prevailing wage law similarly contributes to corruption and needs repeal. New York City should also simplify its building regulations to encourage national competitors to enter the market. On the federal level, Congress should outlaw construction-union-run hiring halls, and, in the meantime, New York's builders should work hard to negotiate them out of future contracts. Finally, it may be up to the next mayor to consider whether the construction industry, or at least segments of it, needs a monitor or oversight commission (ideally with a sunset clause) to organize and direct the anti-mob efforts of various law-enforcement agencies and to develop anti-corruption reforms.

In the war against the mob, Morgenthau rightly says, "We can't declare victory and walk away." ■

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What Is Acceptable Risk?

Roger Scruton

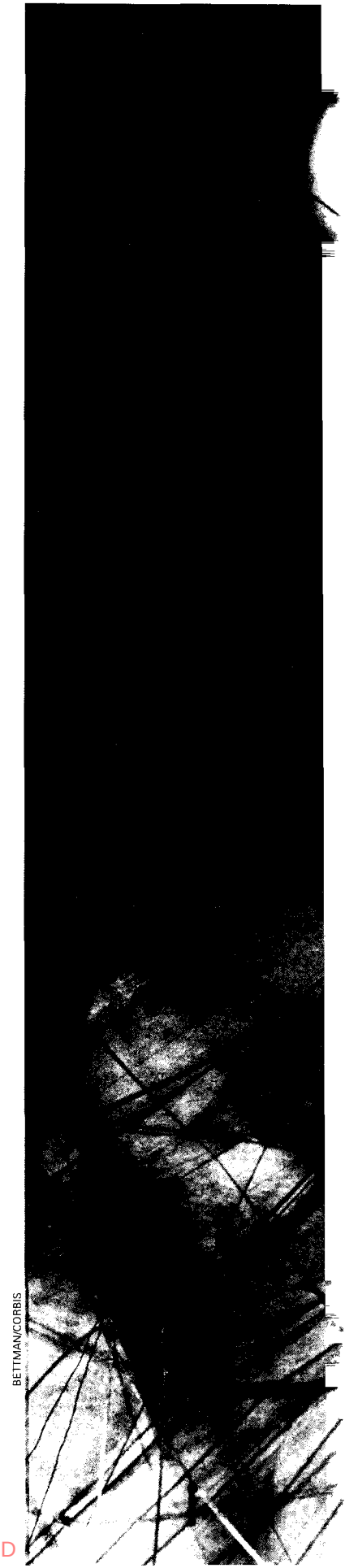
The state of Massachusetts has passed a law against sushi—that is to say, you will be allowed to eat sushi only if it has first been either cooked or frozen, so ceasing, in effect, to be sushi. Why? A minuscule risk exists that sushi, in its normal condition, will make you sick. And this is a risk that the citizens of Massachusetts are no longer allowed to take.

The real risks to individuals and society are not those the state forbids.

Manufacturers of children's playgrounds now predict that swings in public playgrounds will become a thing of the past, since safety regulations require prohibitively expensive padding beneath them. Indeed, the regulations surrounding children's toys, clothes, and activities are now so strict that it is hard to have an adventurous childhood. In England it is even against the law to allow your child to walk down a country lane to school, since there is a one in a billion chance that he will be abducted.

In the past, the law made a distinction between those risks to health and safety that citizens might voluntarily assume and those from which the state should protect them. Since every act of protection by the state involves a loss of freedom, lawmakers assumed that only in very special cases should the state expropriate our risk taking. In matters of public hygiene, where the risks taken by one person also fall upon others, it seemed legitimate for the state to intervene: for example, the state could compel people to maintain standards of cleanliness in public places or to undergo vaccinations against contagious diseases. But it should not forbid a person to consume a certain product, merely because there is a tiny risk to his own physical well-being. For the state to extend its jurisdiction so far involves a serious invasion of privacy. In matters that affect the citizen alone and that have no adverse consequences on others, the citizen should be free to choose. The state can inform him of the risk, but it should not forbid the choice.

Such, at any rate, was the orthodox position, as defended by John Stuart Mill and the "classical" liberals. But it is not the position adopted by our modern legislators, who do their best to remove both the risk and the freedom to run it. My neighbors are farmers who produce dairy products, livestock, and poultry. Within a few yards of my door is an abundance of milk, eggs, chicken, duck, bacon, beef, and cheese. But I must travel six miles if I am to buy any of these things, and what I buy will have traveled a further 1,000 miles, on average, before reaching me. This is because the state has forbidden me to take the risk of eating my neighbors' products, until they have been processed, packaged and purified, released into the endless stream of global produce, and



BETTMAN/CORBIS

It's against the law to let your child walk down a country lane alone in England, for fear of kidnapping.

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entirely purged of their local identity and taste. Although the risk of eating the food that grows next door is solely mine, I am not allowed to take it.

The social, environmental, and political costs of such regulation far outweigh any narrow benefit in terms of health. This is especially apparent to someone who lives among farmers and who observes the decline of their industry, the ruination of the landscape, and the dereliction of the farms that has ensued as a result of the criminalization of their traditional economy. However, all protests against over-regulation fall on deaf ears. Governments now regard risk management as their preserve and their priority, and they are prepared to destroy the country's ability to feed itself in an emergency, rather than tolerate one "unnecessary" case of salmonella.

As soon as you look more closely at the matter, however, you discover that modern governments are very selective in the risks that they forbid, and that a law forbidding one risk will often coincide with a law permitting another. Several European governments are currently proposing to outlaw smoking in public places at the same time as legalizing marijuana. Our own government is destroying the local slaughterhouses on which our meat farmers depend on the grounds of wholly invented and unproven risks, while lowering the age of consent for homosexual intercourse and censuring as "homophobic" those who would alert us to the known medical consequences.

In fact, you will quickly discover that Nanny is not concerned with health so much as life-style. She is eager to protect young people from smoking and cites the health risk as her argument. But she does not wish to protect them from homosexual adventures and therefore forbids all discussion of the risk, far greater though it is than the risk attached to cigarettes. Health legislation is being used not to improve the state of the nation's health but to undermine its old, family-based values and to replace them with the antinomian morality of the urban elite.

This is why our government is indifferent to the effect of its legislative zeal on the lives of small farmers. The family farm is the quintessence of old English society, embodying all those virtues of continuity, tradition, patriotism, and local attachment that our ancestors embraced and defended in two world wars. The farmer is probably the most politically incorrect of Englishmen, and the one most at odds with the media culture that surrounds our government. Hence his way of life can be sacrificed without compunction, and his protests go unheard.

The use of health and safety codes to penalize politically incorrect life-styles was beautifully exemplified here in rural Wiltshire this last year. Nothing makes Nanny more angry than foxhunting—an offense against the manners, dress code, and morality of the urban elite that has the added taint of being a centuries-old tradition. Nanny is trying hard to make foxhunting illegal. In the meantime, self-appointed policemen patrol the hunts with cameras, looking for evidence of some criminal design. Last year, they photographed the kennel man of the Beaufort Hunt as he left the carcasses of chickens by an earth where some fox cubs lived. This outrageous act caused a national scandal: feeding foxes! Nurturing animals in order to hunt them! The fact that the cubs were orphans, abandoned when their mother was run over by a car, was of no account. Nanny had discovered that people who hunt encourage their quarry to live, sadistically preserving it for a gruesome death. The problem was that no rule in the statute book seemed to condemn it.

At last, after several months of delving, a bureaucrat discovered a piece of European legislation saying that you cannot freely dispose of animal waste without following official guidelines and undergoing official inspections. By leaving out uninspected meat in an uninspected place, the kennel man had committed a crime: the very crime that we all commit when putting out suet for birds. Of course, we bird lovers won't be prosecuted—not yet. So far as I can discover, the case of the Beaufort Hunt was the first and indeed the only time that this particular law has been invoked.

The emphasis on life-style also explains the extraordinary war now being waged against tobacco. Smoking belongs with those old and settled habits—like calling women "ladies," getting drunk on Friday nights with your mates, staying married nevertheless, and having babies in wedlock—that reflect the values of a society shaped by the clear division of sexual roles. It is a symbol of the old order, as portrayed by Hollywood and Ealing Studios in the post-war years, and its

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very innocence, when set beside cocaine or heroin, gives it the aspect of discarded and parental things.

Furthermore, tobacco advertising has specialized in evoking old ideas of male prowess and female seductiveness: even now, cigarette ads dramatize decidedly un-hip fantasies that stand opposed to the elite culture—after all, the target consumer is the ordinary person, whose fantasies these are. Nor should we forget that tobacco is big business, from which giant corporations make vast profits by the hour. In almost every way, tobacco offends against political correctness, and precisely because it seems to put older people at their ease and enable them to deal confidently with others, it raises the hackles of those who have never achieved that precious condition and whose discomfort is only increased by the sight of others so harmlessly and sociably enjoying themselves.

"Health legislation is being used not to improve the nation's health but to undermine its family-based values."

This is not to deny that tobacco is a risk to health: of course it is. Moreover, it is just about the only product on the market that relentlessly says so. But the health risk does not really explain the vehemence of the attacks on it or the extraordinary attempts by the Environmental Protection Agency and other bureaucracies to portray cigarette smoke as the single most important threat to our children's well-being. For the risk tobacco poses, when compared with those associated with marijuana, automobiles, fatty food, alcohol, or sedentary ways of life, is not actually very serious. Robert A. Levy and Rosalind B. Marimot have shown that smoking reduces the life expectancy of an American 20-year-old by 4.3 years. In an age when people manifestly live too long, why should Nanny be so worried? And why doesn't she turn her attention instead to those products that risk not the physical but the mental and moral health of the consumer: television, for example, or pornography?

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that what offends about tobacco is not its medical guilt but its moral innocence. It is precisely because it is so harmless, from every point of view other than the medical one, that smoking gets on Nanny's nerves. People don't commit crimes under the influence of smoking, as they do under the influence of drink or drugs. People who smoke have a ready way of putting themselves at ease, of standing back from the world of troubles and taking benign stock of it. Their characters are not distorted or corrupted by their habit, nor is their moral sense betrayed. The smoker is a normal, responsible member of the community, and he can be relied upon, when asked, to put out his fag. He is not led by his habit into transgressing the established order or the old moral code; on the contrary, his habit has been entirely domesticated by the old sexual morality and recruited to the task of glamorizing it.

Contrast the vehement attacks on tobacco with the pussyfooting over AIDS. The fact that the promiscuous habits of many male homosexuals have greatly advanced this disease has done nothing to make Nanny warn against homosexuality or against exposing young people, even children, to its allure. Indeed, the medical facts about homosexuality are now more or less unmentionable in official circles. They are certainly unmentioned by the British government—in this as in most things a touchstone of political correctness—which has stepped up its campaign not merely to lower the age of consent for homosexual intercourse but also to introduce propaganda into junior schools that will legitimize the "gay" alternative. The medical consequences are brushed aside with advice about condoms and lubricants. Doctors who protest are sneered at, and even in writing this paragraph in *City Journal* I am conscious that I am doing my career as a commentator no good and probably ruling out any prospect of a return to a British university.

For all the fuss over the health and safety effects of various substances, it's interesting to see how little the authorities attend to the health and safety of different life-styles. Statistics show that people live longer, happier, and healthier lives if they are in a stable marriage, if they have the support of a religion, and if they adhere to the traditional sexual code. (Maybe you don't have to be a Darwinian to believe that this is no accident.) But where are the health campaigners and the bureaucrats who are drawing

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the legislative consequences? Who is agitating for the laws that will privilege these old-fashioned, not to say reactionary, ways of life or for the propaganda campaigns in schools and colleges that will communicate their benefits?

If an article were to appear in a newspaper describing a drug that prolonged life by so much as a year, the medicine would be hailed as a miracle cure. The real miracle cure—religious belief—seems to have a seven-year advantage over atheism, yet it goes unrecognized by Nanny. Indeed, the health consequences of the libertine life-style are, when compared with the consequences of smoking, truly disastrous. Add atheism, relativism, promiscuity, homosexuality, easy divorce, and unstable relationships together, and you probably knock ten years off your life expectancy. But Nanny will never tell you this and will go on reproaching you for your naughty habit of smoking in corners, even if it is the only way, with such a demanding life-style, to obtain a moment's quiet relief.

Once we see that health legislation is less concerned with physical health than with life-style and the underlying values that life-styles express, we can understand the modern approach to drugs. From the medical point of view, marijuana is at least as dangerous as tobacco, with carcinogenic and cardiological effects comparable with those of ordinary cigarettes and an added danger of brain damage. Moreover, marijuana seems seriously to affect the character and moral responsiveness of those who become addicted to it, and it has a proven association with hard drugs like cocaine and heroin. The connection of all three drugs with crime is well documented by experts and well known to ordinary people. Ask parents what most concerns them among the dangers confronting their children, and you will surely find smoking very low down the list; far higher, and probably nearer the top, will be drugs and the culture that glamorizes them. Hard drugs like heroin kill the user, usually at a young age. But before doing so they rob him of his faculties, his peace of mind, his conscience and consideration for others, his ability to love and be loved. Then they send the body to extinction, already deprived of the soul. And they threaten the lives and the happiness of others—whether parents, lovers, or friends. They present as clear a case as a "classical" liberal could wish for substances whose use should be a crime.

But this is not the message Nanny relays. Drugs are associated with the life-style of which Nanny approves: transgressive, pleasure seeking, contemptuous of stable relationships and objective moral codes. Nanny approves of this life-style because it is subversive of those institutions—marriage, family, local societies, and other "little platoons"—that compete with the state for our loyalties. Where transgression rules, so does the state. Hence in the eyes of the state, the addict is at worst an object of compassion, at best a heroic defender of a valid way of life. His habit is an escape from the intolerable conventions of bourgeois society, and if he lives in a dream world of his own, isn't that his right, in a society that provides no better, or more real, alternative?

Such is the message that is gathering strength among the members of the British political establishment and that corresponds to the emerging reality of our schools. Relentless propaganda against smoking tobacco goes hand in hand with an easy toleration of those who smoke pot, even when they smoke it on the playground. Tobacco users are seeking initiation into the old sexual roles and are therefore subjects of obloquy; marijuana users are preparing themselves for the new, vague, omnisexual life-style, in which real relationships dissolve in a cloud of easy and promiscuous affection. Hence their habit has gained acceptance as no one's business but their own. As far as the health campaigners are concerned, there is no problem. They have averted their eyes, just as they have averted their eyes from the damage done by other habits associated with the youth culture: rock music, for example, which causes widespread deafness; or strobe lights, which cause disorientation of the brain and even epileptic fits.

All this would matter less if the habit of legislation did not encourage a false sense of security. By constantly intervening to save the citizen from self-imposed risk, the legislature creates the impression that everything else is harmless. The citizen need take no care over what he does, so long as he respects the surgeon general's warning and buys in the official market. The state is there to guarantee a risk-free life, and if a risk is not acknowledged by the state, then it doesn't exist. If Nanny sees no harm in

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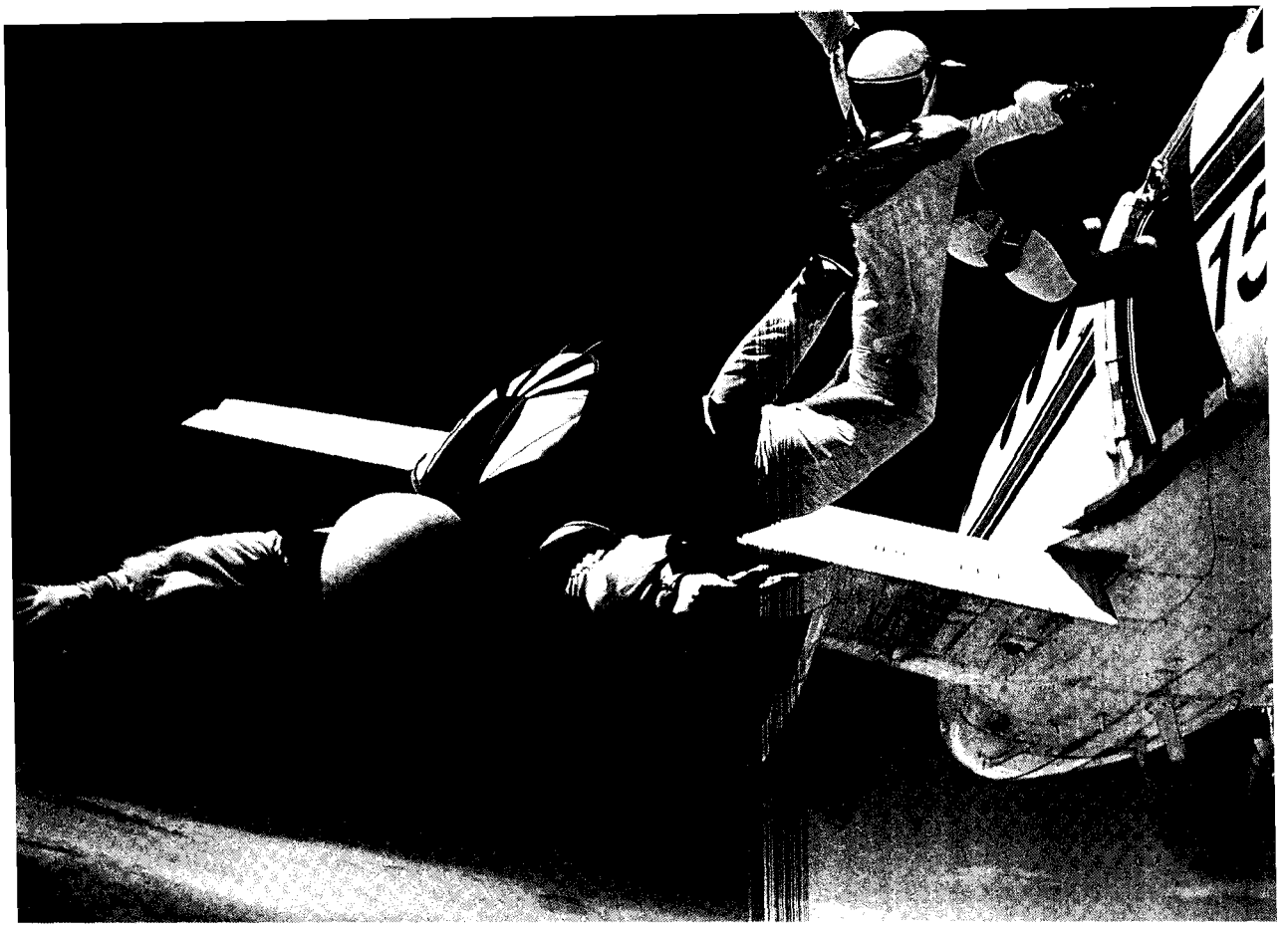

Every act of protection by the state entails a loss of freedom.

pornography or 12-hour doses of television each day or promiscuous but protected sex, then there is no harm in them. Gradually the impression grows that the only risks facing the ordinary citizen are those associated with the old-fashioned life-style glamorized in the Marlboro ads.

Hence the state, by taking charge of risk, massively exposes us to it. The real risks are not those that the state forbids but those that it fosters through its ethos of political correctness. These permitted risks are permitted because it is forbidden to forbid them. To condemn them would be to "marginalize" some valid "alternative" and therefore to interfere with some newly invented or discovered "right." Hence the risks of promiscuity, drug taking, and other habits that short-circuit the rite of passage into adult life are not openly discussed. These practices belong to a culture that has grown under state protection and that is at war with traditional values.

In this way, by being over-protective of the individual, the state undermines society. Almost the entire energy of the health campaigners is devoted to forbidding habits that pose no conceivable social threat, while permitting others that promise social fragmentation. School notice boards now forbid virtually nothing that the young would like to do, save smoking. Their messages about sex, precisely because they are framed exclusively in the language of hygiene, are read as permissions, and their warnings about drugs are noticeably more muted than those relating to tobacco. I am reminded of the scene in *Catch-22* when the hero, going aft to the tail gunner and finding him slumped and bleeding, congratulates himself on the perfect dressing that he applies to the visible wound, only to see a moment later the gunner's guts sliding out from elsewhere.

Of course, a responsible parent would try to prevent his children from smoking. But when the parent takes responsibility, he sees health as part of a larger goal: the long-term fulfillment of his child. This is why it is better, not merely for society but for the individual, too, if education in the taking of risks is left to parents and not appropriated by the state. Wise parents know that their children must grow up and take their place in the community. The child will need nothing so much as the love and trust of others, and these benefits can't be won without a long process of character building and

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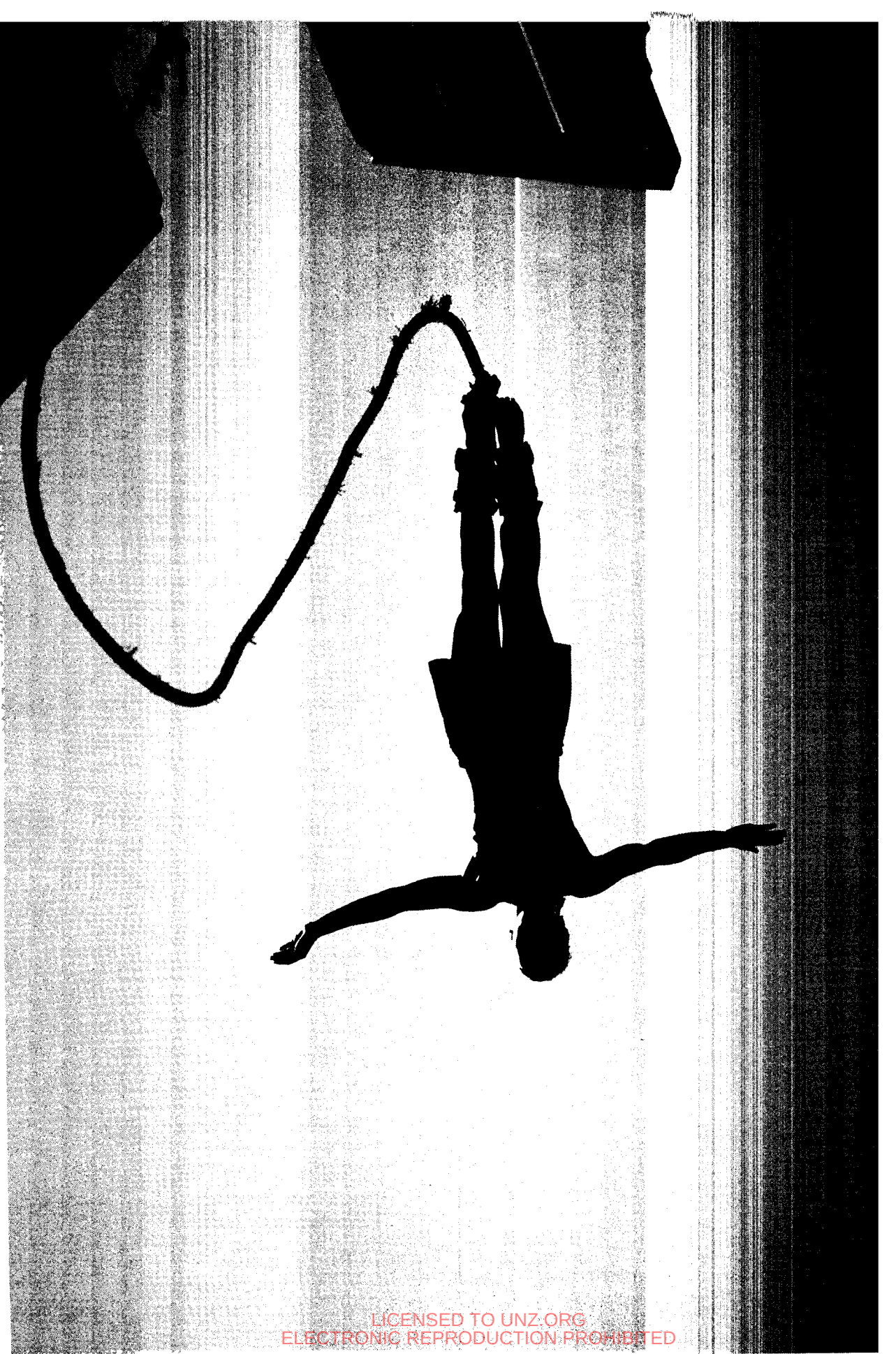

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moral education. No sensible parents believe that the future well-being of their child depends entirely on the chemicals that he ingests, or that they can guarantee his happiness merely by ensuring that his bodily functions conform to the surgeon general's requirements.

By attending to the moral and spiritual health of their offspring, mothers and fathers provide a far better guarantee of longevity than Nanny can offer. As a parent, it seems to me far more important to keep my children away from television than from "environmental tobacco smoke" and far more important to take them to church than to show them the use of a condom. This makes me a misfit, from the point of view of our official culture. But it is part of what makes me fit into the real culture that surrounds me, the culture that Nanny is trying to kill.

Moreover, those risks against which Nanny warns us are also, in a measure, good for us. It is good that children are surrounded by activities that are permitted but disapproved. For they have to learn to make choices and to know that something may be permitted by the law, and even encouraged by the state, despite being morally wrong. Smoking presents us with an easy apprenticeship in interdiction: a way of showing to a child that something that is not a crime nevertheless ought to be avoided. It belongs, with junk food, pop music, and television, to the world of daily temptations, which is the practice-ground for self-control.

Furthermore there are other risks that a child ought to be encouraged to take, despite the fact that Nanny doesn't like them. Children should not be officiously protected from every kind of danger. Just as their immune systems benefit from contact with hostile bacteria, so do their characters benefit from physical risk. In England, it is now almost impossible for a teacher to lead his class on an expedition, to camp out with his pupils on the moors, or to take them to sea in a boat. All such things occur in the gray area between enterprise and crime, where it is foolhardy for a teacher to trespass. In the world that Nanny is now creating, children encounter danger only on the TV screen, where it is the object of unhealthy and sadistic fantasies, rather than the occasion for cool-headed thinking and resourceful courage.

By being overprotective of the individual, the state undermines society.

But this brings us to the crux. Underlying Nanny's attempts to police our way of life is an obsession with the body and its destiny and a refusal to acknowledge that human life is lived, when properly lived, on another plane. You must not smoke, because it harms your body, Nanny asserts (though smoking still leaves the soul in charge and the moral sense undamaged); whereas the harm drugs cause is less important, since drug taking liberates the body. The ecstasy of drugs is a kind of displacement of the soul—a rising up of the body, aided by a physical substance, to usurp the soul's dominion. Similarly, the damage done in the name of sex is done at the body's behest, and by way of overcoming the domain of moral scruples; it is damage done on the body's behalf and in the name of liberation. In all these ways, Nanny promotes the demoralization of the human being and his reconstitution as a purely physical, purely animal thing. Hence Nanny is unable by her very nature to notice that health is promoted far more effectively by a sober, righteous, and godly life than by a fat-free, smoke-free regimen.

But what, in a secular age, should we oppose to Nanny's demoralized vision? It is because people are at a loss for an answer to this question that they capitulate so readily before laws that forbid them to eat sushi, to smoke in public, or to bring up their children as their conscience suggests. In an age when the highest authority is the doctor, and when the state borrows the doctor's white coat, people find themselves insensibly drawn into the vision of themselves as farmyard animals, herded together for their own good.

The answer, it seems to me, is not to deny that we are animals but to recognize that we are animals of a special kind—animals that make themselves by their cooperative efforts into free and spiritual beings. We live by telling our own story, and that story can either ennoble us or demean us. We are ennobled when we learn to coexist with the body on terms, when we subordinate the body's needs to our true loves and loyalties, when we expose it to whatever risks are required by life among friends and neighbors, and when we prevent it from darkening or eclipsing our emotions. No other life is worth living, even if Nanny recommends it. And it is part of the good life that we should not "strive/ officiously to stay alive," but should recognize the grace of timely death—a death that does not come so late that no one regrets it. ■

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Can Mayor O'Malley Save Ailing Baltimore?

Fred Siegel and Van Smith

If you want to understand the challenge Baltimore reform mayor Martin O'Malley faces, walk out of his office in City Hall and head south one block. You're in the thick of a bustling adult-entertainment district called The Block, where the nudie clubs and X-rated shops became famous in the fifties thanks to stripper Blaze Starr, the sometime lover of Senator Russell Long. Amid the neon lights of establishments like Club Pussycat, Foxy Lady, and Pleasure Palace sits a government office building, home of the elections board and the housing agency. Police headquarters and the district courthouse are on the next block east. Local legislators, city office workers, cops, and court clerks rub shoulders with hookers, hustlers, and hard guys, and trundle by doormen beckoning them to check out the ladies, who now dance fully nude, courtesy of a recent court ruling.

In a sharp break with the sin and subsidy city's past, he's actually trying. The early signs look good.

This old-fashioned mingling of officialdom and underworld is a perfect emblem of the political culture that Democrat O'Malley, now in office for just a year, will have to change in order to halt the decades-long decline of the nation's 16th-largest city, a museum of unsuccessful federal urban policies and self-defeating government initiatives. Baltimore's economy bled jobs throughout the long national expansion of the 1990s, as the city's public-subsidy capitalism couldn't staunch the hemorrhaging of private sector jobs. Meanwhile, former mayor Kurt Schmoke's dogged adherence to an ineffective soft-on-drugs policing strategy helped turn Baltimore into one of the nation's crime capitals. Residents fled—more than 120,000 during the 1990s alone. Sapped of its self-confidence, Baltimore became a city "in love with its own victimhood," as one police sergeant puts it—a city imbued, says police chief Ed Norris, with a "Can't be done, don't even try" culture of resignation.

To his credit—and in a real break with Baltimore's past—O'Malley is trying. Properly, he has made crime his first priority. With a murder rate six times higher than New York's, Baltimore can't flourish: frightened residents and determined businesses have little choice but to flee. The mayor's efforts are showing results. Crime is starting to decline, and the first stirrings of a private sector revival are giving the city a glimmer of hope. The task of renewal will be huge, but for the first time in years, the city looks like it has a chance.

The follies that characterized the 1999 mayoral race were a microcosm of Baltimore's dysfunctional mix of politics and illegality, with an added fillip of the racial hostility that is another unfortunate city trademark. Incumbent Schmoke, Baltimore's first elected black mayor, declined to run for a fourth term after a disappointing 12 years in office. That Baltimore failed to flourish under his mayoralty, despite the initial press enthusiasm that hailed the handsome Yale, Oxford, and Harvard Law School grad as a rising black political star, is

DAVID HOBBY/THE BALTIMORE SUN

Baltimore's crime rate soared during the 1990s under former mayor Kurt Schmoke's soft-on-drugs policing strategy. Right: 2000's first murder victim

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a considerable understatement. With nearly 10 percent of the population—60,000 people—addicted to drugs, more than 300 murders a year throughout the 1990s, only 16 percent of third-graders meeting state reading standards, 15 percent of teenagers neither in school nor employed, an unemployment rate twice that of the rest of Maryland, and somewhere between 10,000 and 40,000 homes left vacant by the fleeing population, the city he turned over to O'Malley was on life support.

The presumptive favorite to succeed Schmoke as the city's 47th mayor, former Baltimore congressman and now NAACP head Kweisi Mfume, chose not to run in the Democratic primary, leaving the field open to 17 uninspiring candidates. Cops dragged one contender off to court on an outstanding felony warrant after spotting her during a mayoral forum. Another had a 20-year-long criminal record that included convictions for larceny and impersonating a police officer. The front-runners, City Council president Lawrence Bell and former councilman Carl Stokes (both African-Americans), had had brushes with the law. Bell faced lawsuits for failure to pay personal debts, though he managed to spend more than $4,000 from his campaign war chest on fancy new clothes. The desperate *Baltimore Sun*'s least-worst candidate, "the quiet councilman" Stokes, had repeatedly neglected to pay his income tax, had lied about earning a college degree, and had been caught driving with an expired license.

Despite this sorry slate of mayoral aspirants, when the 36-year-old O'Malley, a white city councilman representing a majority black district, entered the race at the last minute, most observers gave him little chance. Political analysts thought his big idea—to introduce to Baltimore's dangerous and disordered neighborhoods the "broken windows" quality-of-life policing that has dramatically slashed New York's crime rate—wouldn't resonate in the 65-percent black city.

If any city needed quality-of-life policing, though, it was Baltimore. Enthusiastically endorsing the idea of policing as social work, Schmoke had all but decriminalized drug use, insisting that it was a health, not a criminal, problem. Cops grew frustrated arresting druggies only to find them back on the streets a short time later, ostensibly in rehab but in fact selling their wares in menacing open-air drug markets. According to the now-famous broken-windows theory behind quality-of-life policing, widespread tolerance of this kind of uncivil behavior signals a breakdown in the social order, encouraging more serious criminals to act on their darker impulses. An urban environment where cops crack down on the drug dealers sends the opposite message: the social order remains strong, so the bad guys had better watch out. The contrasting experiences of Baltimore and New York bear the theory out. During the nineties, tolerant Baltimore's crime rate, much of it drug-fueled, rocketed upward (75 percent of the city's murders were drug-related); tough-on-crime New York's plummeted.

"Both Bell and Stokes ran race-baiting campaigns so over the top that the two candidates self-destructed."

In a city in which Schmoke won his final term by appealing to racial pride, O'Malley's race quickly became controversial. "Racism," screamed some of the city's black preachers. "An O'Malley victory is the worse thing that could happen to the city, it would tear the city apart," thundered Reverend Doug Miles. But both Bell and Stokes ran race-baiting campaigns so over the top that the two candidates self-destructed. Bell's supporters sent out white-hate fliers endorsing O'Malley—fliers that many thought the Bell campaign itself had produced. The candidate, surrounding himself with menacing Nation of Islam bodyguards, called for black voters to "vote for someone who looks like you." In the campaign's waning days, he even brought in those old warhorses of urban disaster, Marion and Cora Barry, to rally support. Stokes

AL MESSERSCHMIDT/FOLIO INC.

While state-sponsored capitalism nurtured subsidized projects like Camden Yards (left), big private employers like Legg Mason expanded outside Baltimore.

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played the race card too, though not quite so crudely. He came across as the same kind of well-meaning but ineffectual politician as Schmoke, insisting that New York's policing success was "nonsense"—"a license to hunt minorities." "I don't need to go to New York for new ideas," he exclaimed to campaign crowds.

A new approach, however, was exactly what voters wanted. O'Malley won an astounding upset victory in the primary, garnering 53 percent of the total vote and 30 percent of the black vote. Compared with Baltimore's 1995 elections, in which post-election sampling found that 90 percent of voters supported candidates of their own race, O'Malley's success in crossing racial lines was truly impressive. "People are tired of the crime—tired," said one middle-aged black woman who voted for O'Malley.

Easily defeating Republican candidate David Tufaro in the November general election—Democrats outnumber Republicans in Baltimore by nine to one—O'Malley used his inauguration speech to get across the can-do spirit his administration hoped to exemplify. "If there is no wind," he told a large, racially mixed crowd outside of City Hall in December, "you have to row. The best days in life are those when, out of failure and despair, you take on a new challenge. And you feel alive with the promise of what might be." After the dispiriting Schmoke years, refreshingly optimistic words.

On the face of it, O'Malley has some powerful tools for grappling with Baltimore's ills. The city has a strong-executive model of government, which gives the mayor power to set budgetary priorities with little threat of opposition: the 19-member City Council can only cut, not add to, his budget. As long as the mayor can maintain the loyalty of ten or more councilmen, his agenda can safely sail through the lawmaking process. And for now, anyway, O'Malley enjoys nearly universal council support. The mayor also controls three of the five votes on the Board of Estimates, a powerful entity that must approve most city spending.

But Baltimore's plight will test O'Malley's mayoral powers to the limit. Consider the city's economy. For decades, Baltimore has pursued a development strategy that brought it economic trophies that were part of a Potemkin economy, masking underlying failure. Baltimore's approach has emphasized a state-sponsored capitalism that relies almost entirely on federal and state subsidies, rather than market investments, as the key to economic growth.

Baltimore has been one of the few cities in the nation that still have an economy organized around winning clout in Washington in order to funnel federal grant money back home. Democratic senators Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski, both former Baltimore city legislators, make sure their old town gets treated well in the national budgetary process, Sarbanes from his perch as ranking Democrat on the Banking Committee and Mikulski as the key senator on the HUD budget. Together, the two senators have helped make sure that every unworkable federal program—from Urban Development Action Grants to Empowerment Zones—showers funds upon the city.

The city uses the public funds to subsidize well-connected businesses and developers in public-private partnerships. Virtually every major downtown development in Baltimore since the 1950s has involved some sort of public enticement for developers, whether it's a matter of grants, loans, or tax incentives. In Baltimore, the saying goes, the definition of developer is an acronym: OPM—Other People's Money.

One of O'Malley's predecessors, the colorful William Donald Schaefer, who ruled the city from 1972 to 1986, was a champion of state capitalism. He turned to federal grants and city bonds to finance various development projects, and when those monies proved insufficient, he even created his own city bank to seed development: the Loan and Guarantee Fund. The fund financed itself by selling city property and then leasing it back to itself, and by selling bonds that would stick future taxpayers with much of the bill. When the *Baltimore Sun* exposed the fund's shadowy practices, the mayor exploded: "Stay absolutely within the pattern and we would still have, down at the Inner Harbor, a nice rat-infested place."

He's right: the Inner Harbor tourist and entertainment complex, the city's biggest draw after the Baltimore Orioles baseball team, wouldn't exist without massive government subvention. A single

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In Baltimore's adult-entertainment district, just one block from City Hall, city workers rub should hookers and hustlers—an emblem of the city's mix of underworld and officialdom.

example can stand for many: Harborplace, the area's crown jewel, enjoys a $1-a-year lease on the city-owned property—and this after the city demolished the existing waterfront structures, rebuilt the bulkhead along the harbor, and agreed to provide ongoing maintenance.

Yet the Inner Harbor, for all its glittering facade, is emblematic of the potential pitfalls of state capitalism. To see the underside of Inner Harbor's success, suggests economist Steve Walters of Baltimore's Loyola College, look to the Columbus Hall of Exploration, shuttered after only seven months for lack of public interest. Designed as a $60 million entertainment and educational center for children and boasting a stunning roof built of fiberglass sails, the center closed with barely a peep of public comment. Says Walters, "Since much of the money came from the state and the feds, failure really wasn't a problem for Baltimore." The government's redevelopment of the area, economists point out, has also drained vitality from the adjacent downtown, home to such respected private sector financial firms as T. Rowe Price and Alex Brown. State capitalism in Baltimore has a still darker underside, too: in the 1970s, prosecutors jailed Schaefer's deputy public works director and several demolition contractors for bid rigging. The feds had to shut down their Urban Development Action Grants development program in the city because of persistent abuses.

Today, Annapolis (the state capital) and Washington provide a full 40 percent of the city's budget. With both long-term decline and a growing reliance on outside funding, Baltimore has lost control of its own institutions: the jails, the courts, the port administration, the airport, and the community college—all once city entities—are now the state's bailiwicks. Even the public schools have become a city-state hybrid, with the bulk of power now in state hands.

Central to Baltimore's story is the failure—economic and otherwise—of Schaefer's successor and

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Government-subsidized development of the Inner Harbor, Baltimore's glittering tourist and entertainment complex, has drained vitality from the city's adjacent downtown area.

O'Malley's forerunner, Kurt Schmoke. Taking office in 1987, Schmoke continued the policy of milking Annapolis and Washington for funds and handing out patronage. Key to his reelection in 1995 were his close ties to the Clinton administration (particularly HUD officials), ensuring growing federal support for city programs, including a $100 million Empowerment Zone grant to spur job creation. By most accounts, the Empowerment Zone has been a dismal letdown, just as a similar, though much older, neighborhood revitalization program in Baltimore, the Sandtown-Winchester Development Corporation, also failed, despite 25 years of generous Rouse foundation support and federal funding.

Schmoke's trademark—speeches and slogans aside—was passivity in the face of the city's spiraling troubles, explains Gerald Shields of the *Baltimore Sun*. His favorite refrain, "It's out of our control," reverberated through city government, where it was common for a call to a city agency to be answered after many rings with a bored "Yeah."

The tendency to corruption that ran through the Schaefer years persisted under Schmoke. In 1995, federal officials grew suspicious about how the city's housing authority had wasted $25.6 million in HUD funds targeted for housing repair. When the *Sun* published a series detailing serious abuses—including cost overruns and faulty work by no-bid contractors, some with close ties to the mayor—Schmoke's first move was to spend $24,000 in city funds on newspaper ads that stressed that the authority had used "only federal funds, not local tax dollars," and that if officials didn't spend it, they'd have to return the money to Washington. After the feds demanded repayment of $750,000, Schmoke's housing chief, Dan Henson, defiantly said the city didn't owe Washington "diddly." Though the scandal personally implicated neither Schmoke nor Henson, it resulted in the federal convictions of 13 contractors.

In 1998, the inspector general of HUD announced a probe of the Schmoke administration's handling of federal housing aid. Scores of investigators, including FBI agents, were to spend

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three years scouring the city's books for improprieties. The threatened probe sent shock waves through the city's power structure. First Henson, then Schmoke himself, charged that racism motivated the inquiry. Congressman Elijah Cummings from West Baltimore demanded a separate White House investigation into the inspector general's decision. In the end, Schmoke won: HUD secretary Andrew Cuomo pulled the plug on the probe, claiming it was indeed racially motivated.

Even as Schmoke poured state and federal funds into Baltimore's artificial economy, the city's private sector firms were fleeing to the suburbs in droves. Throughout the long national boom of the 1990s, as other formerly industrial cities renewed themselves, Baltimore's economy sagged—even though the city entered the nineties with a solid footing in industries that would prove to be among the nation's fastest-growing elsewhere: financial services and health care.

There remains a viable regional economy, but it's shaped like a doughnut: as Baltimore lost employment, the suburbs gained. From 1990 to 1999, Baltimore lost 58,000 jobs, but the entire metropolitan area—Baltimore plus fast-growing suburban areas like Howard County—added a total of 62,000 jobs. In other words, factoring the city's losses out of the whole region's performance, the rest of greater Baltimore added an impressive 120,000 jobs during the 1990s.

Manufacturing accounted only for a minor part of Baltimore's economic decline. The city began the decade with only 42,000 manufacturing jobs (less than 10 percent of its economy) and lost another 13,000 before the end of the nineties. But its economy also shrank in places that in other cities were growing. Devastated by the population loss, for example, the city's retail and wholesale employment slumped by 23,400 jobs throughout the decade, losing more than a quarter of its total. The city's finance, insurance, and real-estate businesses shriveled by 12,300 jobs, or more than 27 percent, despite the presence of flourishing brokerage and mutual-fund firms like T. Rowe Price and Legg Mason.

Even in the services sector, the fastest-growing of all major job categories nationally, the city performed poorly. Baltimore began the decade with half of all the region's services jobs, but added only 10,000 more. By contrast, the rest of greater Baltimore boosted its services employment by 80,000 jobs during the nineties.

Johns Hopkins, with its vast medical research complex, remained the largest employer in the city—helped out by the federal government, which made it the biggest recipient of federal research grants in the nation. If Hopkins were in California, it might have been a vast economic engine; instead, stranded in Baltimore, it was without greater economic impact: there were almost no spin-offs from Hopkins research. With so little impact from the university, the city's health-care sector barely budged in the 1990s, growing by just 1,900 jobs, or 3.6 percent, while across Maryland, health-care employment expanded by nearly 40,000 jobs, a 25 percent growth rate.

If O'Malley has any hope of jumpstarting Baltimore's stalled economy, he must start from a crucial premise: the city lost jobs because its business environment is unfriendly in the extreme. The city's property taxes are the highest in Maryland, for starters. The city bureaucracy also exhibits a hostile attitude toward business interests. In the mid-1990s, to take one example, Baltimore's biggest law firm, Piper Marbury, looking for new office space to stay in the downtown area, eyed becoming the anchor tenant in one of two new office towers scheduled to go up on land controlled by Baltimore Community College. But political wrangling held up the project, and eventually Piper Marbury fled the city, taking 500 mostly high-paying jobs with it to the suburbs.

Even more telling were efforts to find a new use for the old, city-owned Memorial Stadium, where the Baltimore Orioles played before moving to their spectacular new home in Camden Yards. A team headed by A&R Development proposed converting the stadium area into a research park with office space and promised $45 million in private investment to do the job. Instead, Schmoke and his housing commissioner turned the site over to a nonprofit group that had landed an HUD grant to build senior-citizen housing, even though Baltimore, with its population drain, has a housing surplus. Several neighborhood groups, allowed a say

FRANK FISHER/LAISON AGENCY

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on how to develop the site, weighed in for the nonprofit. One minority community member put it directly: "Give me the skills for one of those high-tech jobs. Then we can talk"—that is, if the jobs are going to be for high-skilled white yuppies rather than unskilled minorities, better no jobs at all. Recently, the state has scuttled the project, sending it back to the drawing board.

A final example: the architecture firm of Whitman, Requardt and Associates began a search for new office space in downtown Baltimore several years ago and settled on a former brownfields site in historic Fells Point, on the edge of the downtown business district. The city had zoned the area strictly, allowing only for a 40-foot-high building. Whitman Requardt requested a variance to build a 54-foot-high building, which would contain the office space it needed. The city's commissioner of Housing and Community Development turned the firm down. "The city's bureaucracy is largely uncooperative, and very old in its thinking," complained C. Richard Lortz, Whitman's managing partner. (The O'Malley administration recently approved a deal that included a $1 million construction loan from the city.)

Faced with such anti-business attitudes, Baltimore's leading companies have expanded in the suburbs instead of in the city. Since the mid-nineties, for example, rapidly growing T. Rowe Price has built five buildings in Owings Mill, Maryland, with 565,000 square feet of office space for 2,200 employees. The Price campus in Owings Mill adds to the nearly 5 million square feet of office space that developers have built in the suburb since the late 1980s, with yet another million square feet scheduled to go up in the near future.

With all these negative things happening to economic development during the nineties, the elephant in the dining room was that you couldn't step outside your office building without risking your life. Under Schmoke's crime-tolerant community-policing regime, locals nicknamed Baltimore "Bodymore, Murderland," for it had become the second-deadliest city in the nation, with more than 300 murders a year, for ten years running. In December, as if to symbolize the end of Schmoke's failed mayoralty, Baltimore experienced one of the most horrific crimes in its history: the execution-style murders of five women—helpless witnesses in a brutal drug-turf war.

In a recent interview, Schmoke admitted frustration over his inability to do anything about the city's crime problem, particularly the frightening murder rate. "After trying a number of things—police athletic centers, community policing, changing the leadership of the police department—and seeing that number stay year after year above 300 [murders], I ran out of ideas," he laments. "There have been many positive changes," said Schmoke, summing up his years in office. "But you can go ten blocks in any direction and see the worst in urban America."

O'Malley's big task is to make Baltimore a safer city, no longer a place where one sees "the worst in urban America." One of his first steps was to bring in a new police chief who knew the drill on quality-of-life policing: Edward Norris, a career officer of the New York City Police Department, was sworn in last May. Asked why Baltimore's murder rate had skyrocketed, Norris responds bluntly: "This culture of 'can't do' became pervasive in the police department. Over the last ten years, maybe longer, they were told, as a police department: you can't do it, don't try, don't arrest drug dealers, you can only get us in trouble if you take proactive steps, you can't do anything about it unless [drugs] are legalized," he says. "Enforcement was something that was really frowned upon." Or as a public commission put it in December, "Our Police Department has become demoralized" by its inability to fight crime.

Norris needed to change the department's crime-fighting strategy dramatically. In a city the Drug Enforcement Agency says has the worst heroin epidemic in the nation, and one of the worst crack problems, only 23 detectives were investigating narcotics cases citywide when Norris arrived. "I mean, how serious are you about this?" he asks incredulously. In the short time since he's become commissioner, that number is up above 150, and he's seeking federal assistance to boost it to 300 or 400. Similarly, when he took over the department, only four officers were assigned to track down suspects named in 54,000 open warrants—250 of them for murder or attempted murder. He's assigned a total of 75 officers to the warrant squad, and so far under

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his watch cops have arrested 96 people wanted for murder or attempted murder, compared with only 11 in all of 1999.

The sense of disbelief in Norris's voice is tangible as he talks about how ill-equipped the police department was to carry out its duties. "You have the Number One drug problem in America, but they did not have the capability to do an eavesdropping case. There were no surveillance vans here," he grumbles. "It was like they were caught in 1957 or something." Since his arrival, he boasts, "we have more wiretaps up now than in the history of the police department."

In the seven and a half months since Norris took over in May, the murder rate has dropped 21 percent, and Baltimore is on schedule to be under 300 murders for the first time in more than a decade.

"Under Schmoke's crime-tolerant community policing, locals nicknamed Baltimore 'Bodymore, Murderland.'"

O'Malley's third major challenge—in addition to reforming Baltimore's economy and slashing the crime rate—is to break with Baltimore's corrupt political culture. O'Malley has one foot inside and one foot outside this culture. As the son-in-law of the state's attorney general, Joseph Curran, whose family has controlled northeast Baltimore politics since the 1940s, O'Malley belongs to one of the state's most powerful political dynasties. To help win in 1999, O'Malley relied on notorious political fixer Jack Pollack's organization—now managed by his son Morton—to get crucial votes out of the city's highest-voting precincts in northwest Baltimore. O'Malley's campaign even accepted a $2,500 donation from Rosalie Jackson, the mother of Kenny Jackson, once a top lieutenant in a powerful heroin-trafficking organization, though today, reportedly reformed, a confidante of the city's black political leadership.

But in truth, O'Malley's a latecomer to Baltimore politics. He grew up in the Maryland suburbs of D.C. and cut his teeth on the national stage working for Senator Gary Hart's two presidential campaigns. He first came to Baltimore in the mid-1980s to help Senator Mikulski win re-election. He attended law school, worked as a prosecutor, and in 1990 won the first of two terms in the City Council. In a city where current political allegiances have decades-old roots, O'Malley—just by virtue of being born in the 1960s in another town—is a political *arriviste*.

As an outsider of sorts, O'Malley brings fresh activism in fighting Baltimore's seedy political mores. When a councilman, he condemned Schmoke's drug-law liberalization policies, called for the dismissal of two successive police chiefs, and exposed the manipulation of the city's crime numbers. He tried to force accountability in the spending of federal housing dollars, and he took the lead in crafting an early-retirement program to reduce government expenses. (An even better target in cutting expenses would be the public schools, a long-time patronage reservoir, which have added more than 5,000 workers over the past several decades, even as enrollment fell 7 percent.) Now that he's in charge, he's forcing a can-do attitude on a bureaucracy that's unaccustomed to a leader who actually expects results.

Perhaps the most tangible expression of O'Malley's push for governmental effectiveness is his "CitiStat" program. Described by political scientist Don Norris as "an unprecedented attempt to rethink Baltimore," it introduces transparency and accountability into a city notoriously unfamiliar with either. Modeled on the New York City Police Department's Compstat program to map crime and direct resources where they are needed, CitiStat applies rapid data-gathering and analysis to all city agencies. Every two weeks, the mayor and his cabinet bring agency managers before them to answer for what the latest round of numbers reveals. Everyone working in government has access to the same information, so insiders can't escape scrutiny.

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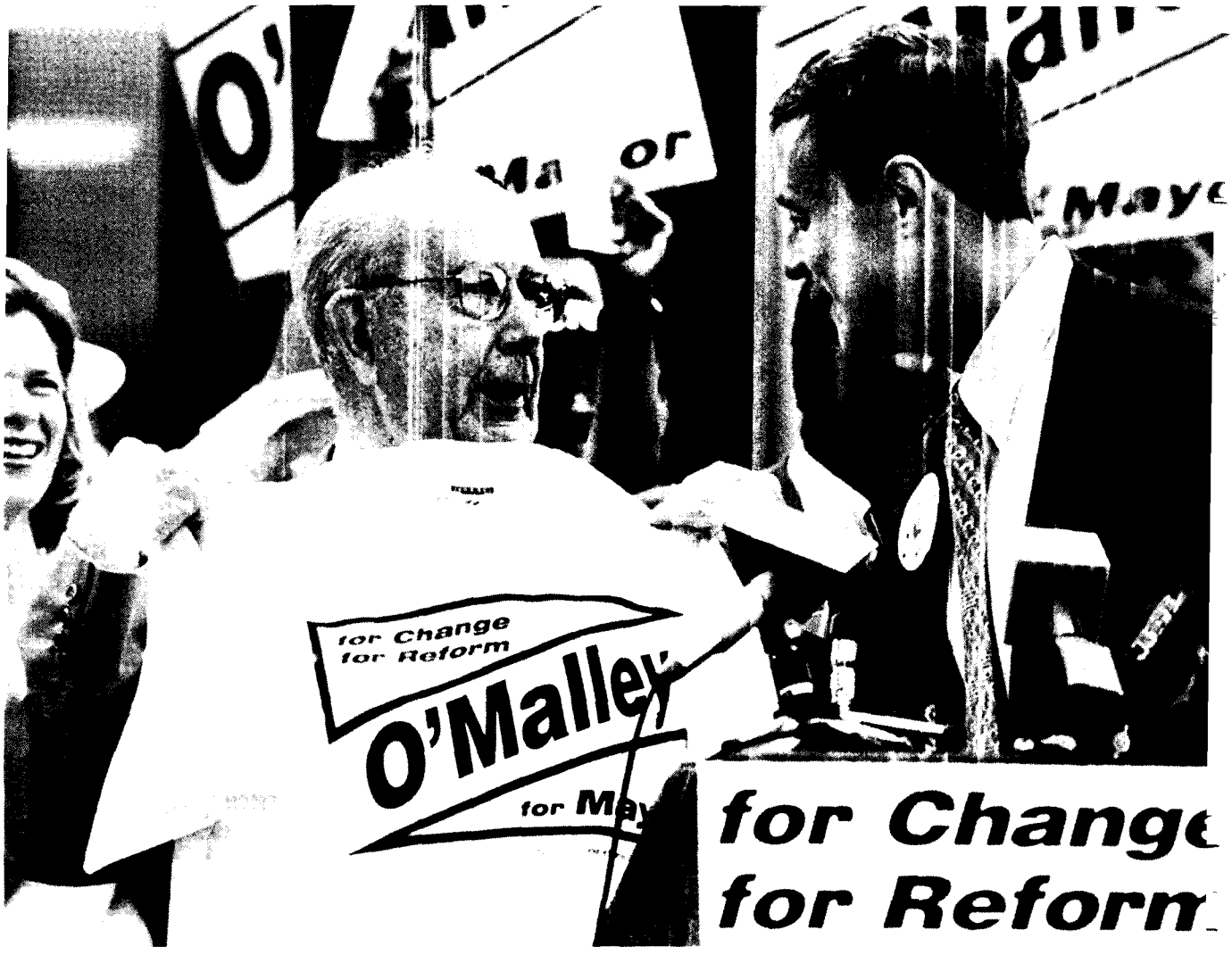

Former Baltimore mayor William Schaefer (left) gives candidate O'Malley (right) a boost.

At the CitiStat session we attended, deputy mayor Michael Enright began by grilling the sanitation commissioner on why he had exceeded his overtime allotment. When the commissioner blamed the problem on broken trucks, the deputy commissioner in charge of repair explained that a big part of the fleet-maintenance problem was simply that repair people weren't showing up for work or even bothering to call in sick. His response, something previously unheard of in Baltimore, was to fire some of the offending employees.

The knottiest problems involved inter-agency jurisdictional confusions. The rat-abatement program, for example, was languishing because of a dispute between the sanitation and housing departments. In talking to each other in front of the CitiStat board, the commissioners resolved that the sanitation department didn't need housing's permission to enter abandoned, privately owned, lots in search of rats. This, said O'Malley, was the "CitiStat rat epiphany moment."

CitiStat's aim of systematic accountability is normal in business but extraordinary in Baltimore. Over time, as the city works out the system's kinks and the data become more timely and reliable, CitiStat should improve agency performance. In the meantime, its inception has found a warm welcome from state political leaders who worry about wasteful administration of a city budget that relies on huge sums from Annapolis. Casper Taylor, speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, recently sat in on a CitiStat session and remarked afterward, "This is going to make a big difference in how Annapolis looks at Baltimore."

Though the problems O'Malley faces are undeniable, the city he leads isn't without hope. The seeds of a new, digitized urban economy are beginning to sprout along Baltimore's waterfront—"Digital Harbor," as city leaders now call it. Baltimore is increasingly seen as a cheaper, more livable alternative to the high rents, horrible congestion, and antiseptic environment of tech-booming Northern Virginia, a mere 40 miles south on I-95. There's a rising demand for unique, cheap office space with

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nearby housing, things that Baltimore, with its surplus of abandoned industrial buildings and potentially charming waterfront neighborhoods, has in abundance. Local developers seemingly can't convert old factories into high-tech offices fast enough. Some waterfront areas like Canton, where there has been a fourfold increase in property values, are blossoming.

Eighteen months ago, few people recognized Baltimore's high-tech potential. Penny Lewandowski, then the just-hired executive director of the newly formed Greater Baltimore Technology Council, complained that "nobody has a clue that this community is growing and thriving right here in the city." At that time, O'Malley's idea of a tech strategy for the city consisted primarily of putting computers in public schools. Now he's come to see the high-tech sector as absolutely crucial to the city's economic success. This July, speaking to the Democratic Leadership Council, O'Malley demonstrated just how far his thoughts about technology had advanced. "We have made recruiting, supporting, and growing tech companies our highest economic development priority," O'Malley said, "because the Digital Harbor is Baltimore's future. And, as anyone who has visited lately can see, it's also Baltimore's present."

"Local developers seemingly can't convert old factories into high-tech offices fast enough."

AP PHOTO/GAIL BURTON

O'Malley is touting figures—$300 million in state funding, a truly impressive $3.5 billion in *private* investment, and 50,000 new permanent jobs for the city in the next five years—that are hard to believe. After all, the latest reliable figures about the size of the Digital Harbor, which date from 1998, aren't impressive. In a state where 7.9 percent of total private sector employment is in technology jobs, the Baltimore region pales, with only 6.2 percent, and the city lags dramatically, with just 2.4 percent.

Still, the researcher who came up with these statistics—Anirban Basu of Towson University's Regional Economic Studies Institute—is optimistic. He points out that the employment figures don't include the tech-laden universities Johns Hopkins and University of Maryland, and suggests also that the fastest, most stable growth in the high-tech sector is among the smaller, start-up tech companies for which Baltimore is fast becoming a magnet. Recent venture-capital trends reflect this shift. "Maryland companies, particularly those in Baltimore, topped their Northern Virginia counterparts in landing the biggest cash infusions of the quarter," the *Washington Post* reported in November.

A trademark of the new knowledge-based economy is the idea that companies can locate anywhere. But, Basu points out, technology firms tend to cluster in metropolitan areas with large pools of talented workers—where the workers go, firms follow. This leads to a new way of thinking about economic development for cities that doesn't emphasize incentives to companies so much as it does quality of life for young tech workers. Baltimore's cityscape, dotted with charming old neighborhoods, is an attractive location for the young "creatives" powering the second, software and content, side of the digital revolution.

O'Malley, who is now enjoying overwhelming public support, sees an unlimited future for Baltimore. "When Baltimore's homicide rate comes down," he enthuses, "it will be like pulling a sheet off of a beautiful sculpture whose virtues had been forgotten." He may be right: if the tech tide keeps rising as the crime rate declines and the city's racial hostilities stay in check, look for Baltimore to climb back from the brink.

Still, there are large question marks. O'Malley has transplanted twenty-first-century technology onto an early-twentieth-century political culture. Will the old body eventually reject the new implant? Will O'Malley himself, a man who seems clearly marked for state or national office, stay with the job? It's not clear, but if the transplant takes hold and O'Malley stays the course, Baltimore seems likely to have a far brighter future.

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The Met's Triumphant Democratic Elitism

Heather Mac Donald

In his catty memoir of his years at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, former director Thomas Hoving recounts an exchange with a certain associate curator of European paintings, Philippe de Montebello. De Montebello had come to Hoving in 1969 for career advice, says the former director. Happy to oblige, Hoving let fly that de Montebello's future in the European paintings department "wasn't promising." *Entre nous*, Hoving gleefully shares with the reader, de Montebello's supervisor was convinced he "had no eye."

Another colossal blunder by the colossally self-centered Hoving.

De Montebello would return to the Met after a stint away (sneered Hoving: "I was glad to get rid of him") to become the longest-tenured and most respected American art-museum director of our time. That respect is surprising, for de Montebello explicitly rejects every dogma that pervades the museum world today. Where many museums furiously troll popular culture for exhibits that appeal to the lowest common denominator, de Montebello mounts shows based on the highest standards of connoisseurship. Where other museums repudiate their aesthetic authority as oppressively "elitist," de Montebello insists that a museum's primary duty is to exercise aesthetic judgment. Where some museums undercut the distinction between high art and mass entertainment, the Met stands for the proposition that there is such a thing as high culture and that it is worth our attention and respect.

De Montebello's great accomplishment unquestionably depends in part on the Met's enormous resources—its encyclopedic collections, its billion-dollar endowment, its location, and its worldwide reputation. But having resources in no way guarantees that they will be used wisely: Harvard University's endowment, several times bigger than the Met's, doesn't save it from all the trendy clichés of race-gender-class reductionism. Another director could turn the Met into a blockbuster mill or an up-to-the-minute "site" for "deconstructing gendered imperialism." Just recall the very different reign of Thomas Hoving, unintentionally parodied in his attempted jab at de Montebello: "I knew he was conservative, but I hadn't quite realized that he was opposed to everything I was trying to do. . . . He wanted no razzmatazz, but scholarly shows." The horror!

De Montebello has corrected Hoving's mistakes without diluting the institutional charisma Hoving created—proving that a large audience exists for uncompromised excellence. This is a lesson other museums should heed.

Four New York shows last fall exemplified the divisions in today's museum world. At the Met was a classic de Montebello exhibit—scholarly, beautifully mounted, and intended to bring to the public's attention an artist neglected for not being named Monet or Matisse. "The Music of Silence" presented the work of Evaristo Baschenis, the leading still-life painter of seventeenth-century Italy. Baschenis loved the sensuous musical instruments of his day, whose satiny finishes and graceful curves he captured with striking virtuosity. His masterpiece, the Agliardi triptych, includes a self-portrait of the somber, middle-aged artist playing a spinettina, while at the other end of the triptych the deep-set eyes, the pallor, and the full, pouting mouth of Bonifacio Agliardi, one of three brothers in the composition, mesmerize with their aristocratic languor. Between the figures, an overturned lute is shrouded in dust, streaked by a hand that had tried to draw the instrument out of its long silence. The work embodies the exquisite melancholy of baroque music, and hits an American viewer as the freshest of new discoveries.

Seven blocks up Fifth Avenue, the Giorgio Armani show at the Guggenheim reminds us that the "art" in an "art museum" these days is optional. The Guggenheim has turned its entire spiral ramp into one endless advertisement for Armani; by the fourth turn of the screw and the hundredth loose-fitting pantsuit, the nightmare sensation of being trapped in a tiny Bloomingdale's boutique grows overwhelming.

Just how tacky is this use of museum space? Read the muse-

The Met's new Greek galleries are a triumph of civilization.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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um's *Family Activity Guide*. Next to advertising photos of models in two Armani "power suits," identified with scholarly precision as "from his spring/summer 1979 men's collection" and "his fall/winter 1984–85 women's collection," is this direction to the museum's grade school patrons: "Circle the word or words below that might describe your feelings if you were wearing this suit: important, comfortable, proud, confident, elegant." Where is the left-wing critique of consumer culture when you need it? But what Marxist academic would dare utter a peep against an institution that runs a homosexual-film series, featuring such titles as *Safe Sex Slut*, *AIDSCREAM*, and *Reclaiming Desire: How to Have Sex in an Epidemic*?

Across the East River, the Brooklyn Museum of Art presents a heartbreaking spectacle of a once august institution beached by demographic change, now flailing desperately to find a new audience—whatever the cost. "Hip-Hop Nation: Roots, Rhymes, and Rage" presents the billion-dollar hip-hop industry, complete with gangster rap, obscene, misogynist lyrics, and city-killing graffiti, as art worthy of inclusion in a museum dedicated to man's greatest achievements.

And back in midtown Manhattan, the Museum of Modern Art is displaying some of the grotesque products of contemporary Soho and Chelsea, created as props to the cultural elite's favorite "issues"—AIDS, sex, AIDS, feminism, AIDS, homosexuality, AIDS, the patriarchy, AIDS, the irrelevance of artistic skill, AIDS, and capitalism. Kiki Smith's contribution to the AIDS "issue" is 12 silvered water bottles all in a row, marked with the labels "semen, mucus, vomit, oil, diarrhea, urine, sweat, pus," and so on. Jeff Koons's cynical kitsch is represented by a high-gloss ceramic bust of a porn star on whose breasts the Pink Panther is pressing his crotch. The section allegedly on childhood claims that our age is "marked by a new consciousness of the body and sexuality," hence it requires art of a particularly disgusting nature: a little girl's Mary Jane shoe made of white wax, from whose insole obscenely sprout long black hairs, or Charles Ray's mannequins of a naked man, woman, boy, and girl, all of the same size, whose genitalia are represented in excruciating detail, down to dime-store wigs for the pubic area.

As different as they are today, all four museums originated from the same progressive conviction that a democratic society needed access to the finest culture. Art ennobles, so it should be available to all people, reasoned the democratic elitists who founded the Met, Washington's Corcoran Gallery, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1870. As late as 1937, the Guggenheim's charter sounded the same themes: the museum would "provide for the promotion of art and for the mental and moral improvement of men and women by furthering their education, enlightenment, and aesthetic taste," declared its founders.

Corporate lawyer and Met trustee Joseph C. Choate issued a bravura challenge in 1880 that captures the era's exuberant hopes that a young, rapidly industrializing nation could rival Europe in its cultural treasures. Opening the Met's dumpy new Central Park building (eventually swallowed up by later additions), Choate let his rhetoric soar, as Calvin Tomkins's masterful Met history recounts: "Think of it, ye millionaires of many markets—what glory may yet be yours, if you only listen to our advice, to convert pork into porcelain, grain and produce into priceless pottery, the rude ores of commerce into sculptured marble, and railroad shares and mining stocks—things which perish without the using, and which in the next financial panic shall surely shrivel like parched scrolls—into the glorified canvases of the world's masters, that shall adorn these walls for centuries. . . . [O]urs is the higher ambition to convert your useless gold into things of living beauty that shall be a joy to a whole people for a thousand years."

The Met's founders had no doubt that such a thing as high art existed (unlike many of today's museum and art professionals), but their feeling for what it was was a work in progress. A taste for the Dutch masters and the early Italian Renaissance was only just beginning to replace enthusiasm for the syrupy salon paintings pouring out of the European academies in the 1870s; the Met bought Franz Hals and his compatriots and Bouguereau and his circle with equal gusto. The trustees regarded the impressionists with alarm.

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Democratic elitism was one thing in theory, another in practice. The city, which contributed to the Met's maintenance and owned its land, demanded that the museum open on Sundays, so workmen could visit. The trustees recoiled at this assault on the Sabbath but in 1891 morosely acceded. The first encounter with the working class was tense, with grumbling about the "repulsive" habits of the new visitors, but the practice endured, to the apparent benefit of all. When the tabloid press clobbered the Met in 1897 for ejecting a smelly plumber in work clothes, the museum's feisty first director, General Luigi Palma di Cesnola, shot back that the Met's etiquette code was civilizing the city: "You do not see any more persons in the picture galleries blowing their nose with their fingers. . . . There is no more spitting tobacco juice on the gallery floors, to the disgust of all other visitors. There are no more nurses taking children to some corner to defile the floors of the Museum."

Donations started pouring in during the 1880s from the new industrialists and financiers: Etruscan and Venetian glass, musical instruments, Vermeers, Rembrandts, lace, enamels, porcelains, metalwork, antiquities, and furniture, as well as million-dollar legacies for the endowment. In many ways, though, the museum remained an amateur organization with a rather tolerant sense of aesthetic inclusion. That would change in 1904, when J. P. Morgan became president. Perhaps the greatest art collector in American history, Morgan turned the same voracious appetite toward the increase of the Met's possessions as toward his own. The Met would now be about masterpieces and only masterpieces. The museum would start rejecting gifts if they did not meet its standards of excellence. "There was money in the air, ever so

DON PERDUE

Elitism is the very essence of democracy, seeking to elevate the people, says Metropolitan Museum director Philippe de Montebello.

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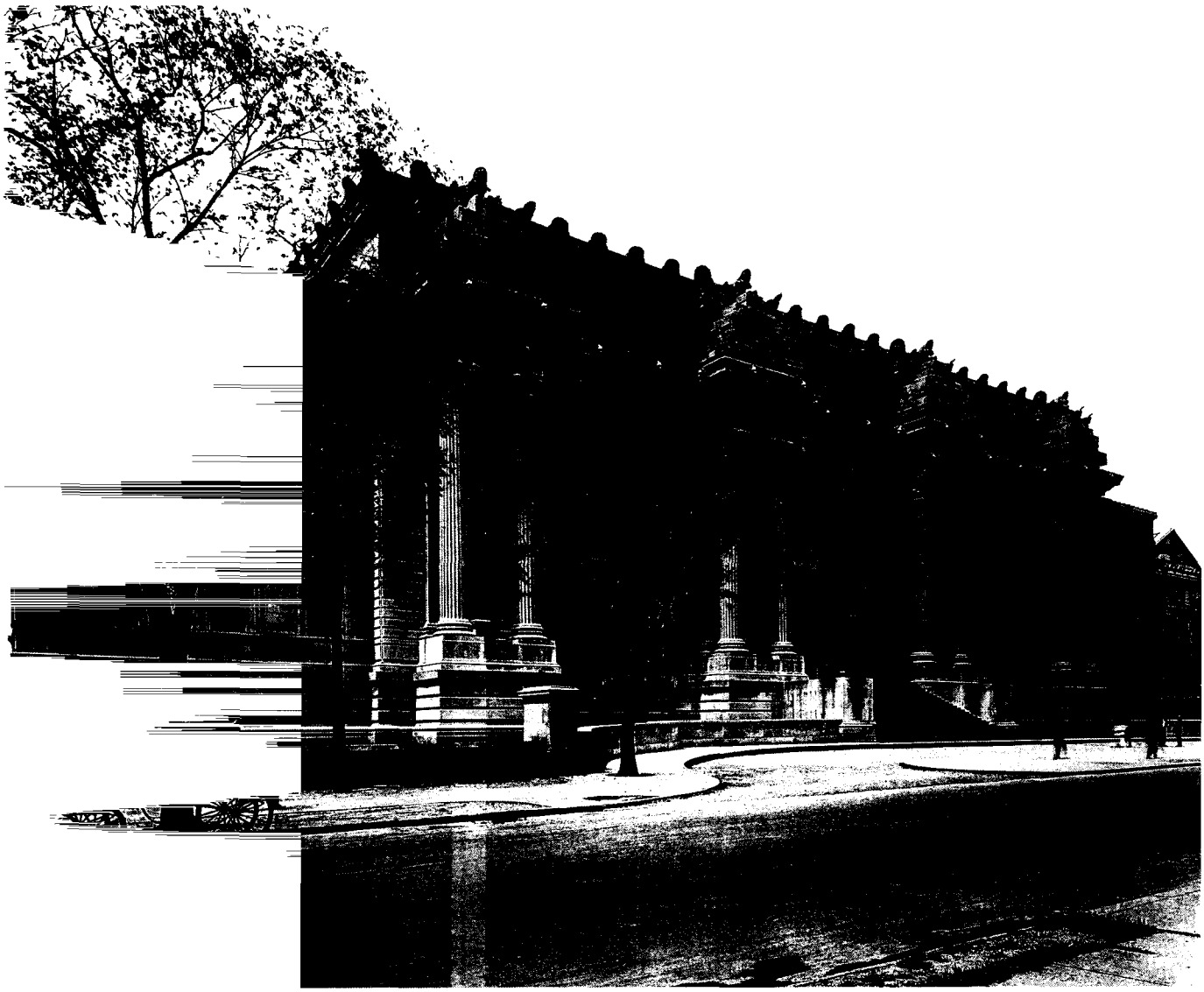

The Met would be only about masterpieces, after J.P. Morgan became president in 1904.

much money," wrote Henry James. "And the money was to be all for the most exquisite things—for *all* the most exquisite things except creation."

The first 50 years of the twentieth century saw numerous internal developments at the museum. Slowly, the Met started organizing itself on a corporate model, with efficient systems for cataloging and purchasing (though for decades, only the MFA in Boston would command Europe's respect as a truly professional museum). In the 1920s, the Met jumped happily into the age of Egyptian excavations, setting up a permanent camp at the Nile, financed and often visited by Morgan. The new American wing for decorative arts opened in 1924. The Cloisters, the magical sanctuary for medieval art and architecture in northern

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Manhattan, followed in 1938, a labor of love by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and future director James Rorimer. In ever greater numbers, collectors lavished their treasures on the museum.

The trustees' earlier resistance to the impressionists eventually evaporated, but a much longer battle raged over living American artists. First the Ashcan School, then the abstract expressionists wanted in; Stuart Davis branded the Met a "totalitarian regime" for its exclusion of abstraction. The Met's erudite director, Francis Henry Taylor, fired back that a new, pro-abstract "Academy of the Left" in the art press, the universities, the Whitney, and MoMA, was itself suppressing representational art. In their crusade to liberate artists from all formal constraints, Taylor charged, these propagandists had created a new tyranny that merely "substituted the rubber girdle for the whalebone corset." Taylor was known to refer to MoMA as that "whorehouse on 53rd St.," according to Calvin Tomkins.

But the power of that "Academy of the Left" proved insuperable, and by 1950 the Met was mounting its own abstract expressionist shows. The trustee purchasing committee would greet abstract canvases with howls of laughter and snorts of disbelief, but it meekly bought them, conforming to the dictates of the "art community" rather than personal taste. How much more interesting the art world would have been had the Met created an alternative canon of twentieth-century art, rather than mimicking MoMA.

BROWN BROTHERS

Meanwhile, a different strain of criticism was growing more insistent: that museums were too "elitist." Critics both inside and outside the museum profession argued that museums should focus on practical objects of good design and help housewives and immigrants with homemaking tips. As early as 1942, the call for "social consciousness" went out from no less important an institution than the American Association of Museums. Museums had become "hypnotised by the charms of collecting and scholarship," the AAM charged. Since collecting and scholarship formed the backbone of any museum, a defense was swift in coming. Museums had already gone too far toward popular outreach, argued the connoisseurs. John Walker, director of the National Gallery of Art, snapped in 1944 that a "work of art is not a specimen, not primarily an historical document, but a source of pleasure, analogous, say, to a musical composition."

Still, the museums tried, with varying degrees of imagination, to increase their educational and outreach activities: joining the urban beautification movement, loaning objects to hospitals, shops, and schools, offering extension classes, and opening junior museums for children. The Met regularly brought schoolchildren through and offered classes in art appreciation.

With post-war prosperity, the baby boom, and increased college attendance, the masses started coming, whether the museums sought them out or not. *Life* magazine began a regular fine-arts feature. The Book-of-the-Month Club sold over 8 million tiny Met reproductions between 1948 and 1958. The Met's annual attendance hit 2 million in 1950; in 1963, the "Mona Lisa" drew a million visitors, many willing to wait hours in line. The era of the blockbuster had arrived.

With the perverse logic that still governs museum management today, the more the public came, the more the museums contorted themselves to stuff even more bodies in. One dissenting director warned in 1961 that museums of all stripes—science, art, and history—were starting to resemble "cocktail lounges or drive-ins." "Where once museums sought to collect, then publish the results of their collecting in scholarly reports," he observed, "today we are often expending nine-tenths of our energies to see how much and how fast we can make the public fall in love with us." And indeed by 1962, museum professionals, whose language of enlightenment was giving way to that of consumer choice and marketable product, put museum-going in the same category as bowling or going to a baseball game.

So by the time Thomas Pearsall Field Hoving, son of Tiffany chairman Walter Hoving, took the Met directorship in 1966, museums were already moving in the direction of mass entertainment. Hoving floored the accelerator.

A serious medievalist, Hoving nevertheless embraced the sixties' countercultural belief that

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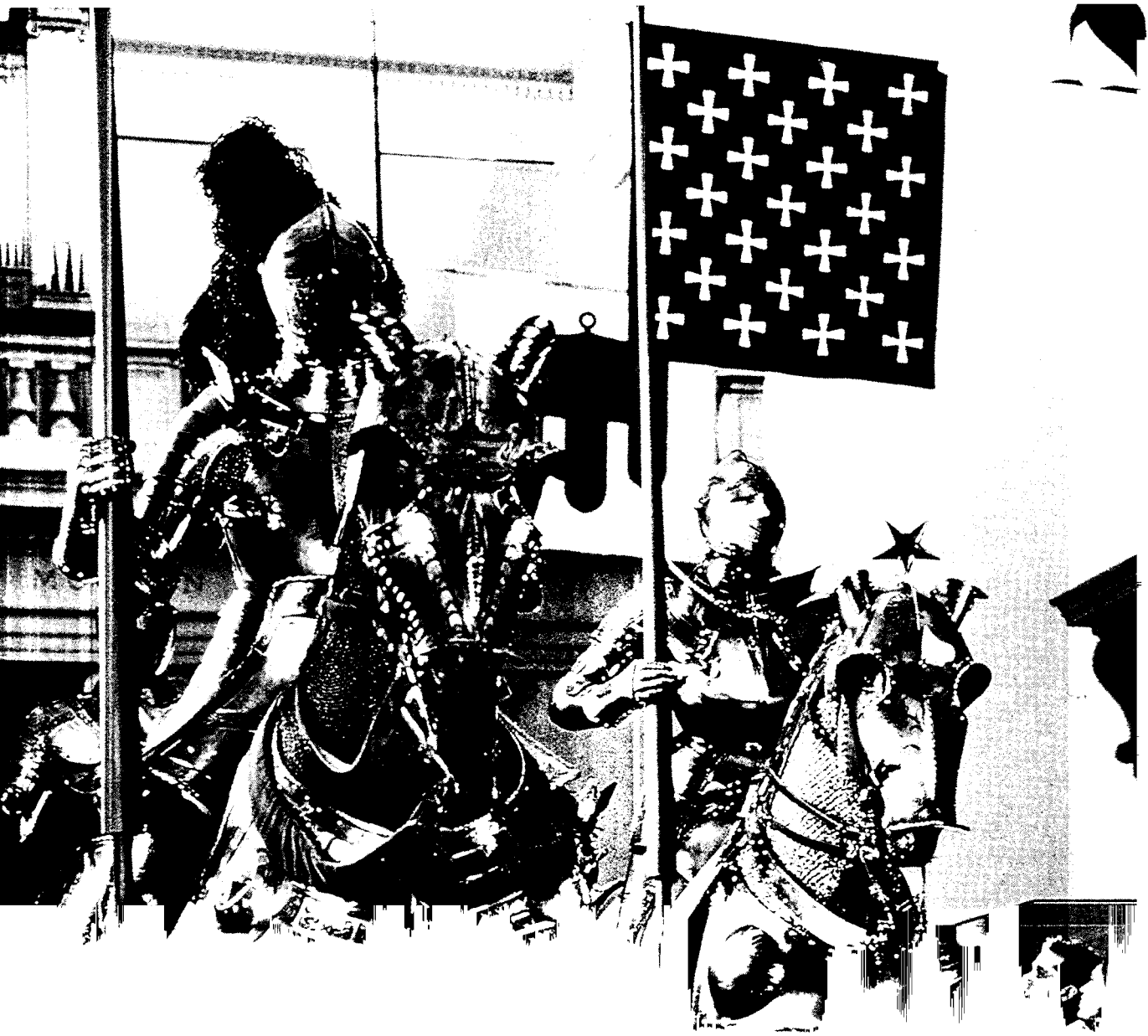

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the past was stifling and "irrelevant" to the far more exciting and important present. He apparently convinced a critical mass of Met trustees that their own museum desperately needed shaking up, just as he had shaken up the city parks department as commissioner by staging "happenings." His pronouncements in the Met *Bulletin* had the biff-blam-pow breathlessness of pop art: "In these critical times it would demean the intent of our founders were we merely to sit timorously behind our collections," he wrote in October 1968. "It is time to be daring, innovative, highly imaginative, and to be so not at the expense of, but in the service of the highest levels of scholarship. Great art must be shown with great excitement. We shall be merely a musty vault if we do otherwise."

The key words are: "sit timorously behind our collections." Hoving's innovation was to focus attention away from a museum's permanent collections and onto an ever changing array of glittering exhibits, which he advertised like Broadway shows. He ushered in the blockbuster mania with "The Treasures of King Tut," and "In the Presence of Kings," encouraging visitors to think of museums as a location for the temporary staging of large numbers of loaned objects, preferably made of gold, instead of places where great works can be consulted again and again. "People now ask, 'What's new at the Met?' instead of, 'What's still there?' " laments George Goldner, the Met's chairman of Drawings and Prints.

De Montebello upgraded the Met's gallery installations, including its armor display.

Hoving's memoir of his Met directorship, *Making the Mummies Dance*, is a remarkably unapologetic display of wildly immature self-infatuation. In his ruthless contempt for the trustees and other donors, Hoving comes off as a spoiled brat sticking his tongue out at his elders. His megalomania was stamped all over his disastrous 1969 intervention into America's race problem, "Harlem on My Mind," a massive show of photojournalism (the Met's first) documenting black culture and white racism, accompanied by dozens of slide projectors, audiotapes, and music.

With an unfailing ear for the clichés of the time, Hoving had already called on the American Association of Museums to "become relevant and help cure the agonies of the nation." He would show how. "As a member of the white liberal establishment," he writes (one hopes, ironically), "I was mesmerized by the idea of a photographic history of Harlem at the country's most distinguished art museum."

It was the catalog that blew up Hoving's preposterous ambition to serve as the Great White Healer. A remarkable production for an art museum, with chapter headings that read like a New Left sociology textbook ("Race Riot," "Landlord Brings in Negroes to Get High Rents"), the catalog contained a prose poem by a 16-year-old Bronx high school student blaming Jews for blacks' problems. (Hoving added his own fictions as well: an account of his privileged childhood with two wholly fabricated black servants. So much for liberal scholarship.)

When word of the poem got out, thousands protested outside the Met; the City Council voted to withdraw city funding; and even Hoving's patron mayor, John Lindsay, denounced the catalog as racist. Hoving dug himself in deeper by defending the poem's social analysis as accurate. The show's opening night was a downer, temporarily redeemed only by the arrival of a real live Black Panther, Hoving recalls. Museum staff later discovered that ten paintings throughout the museum, including a Rembrandt, had been slashed with an "H."

Harlem on My Mind" nearly cost Hoving his job. Nevertheless, he managed to stay on for another seven years, continuing to shake up what he scornfully called the "silent repository of great treasures." His ambitious expansion plans (he initiated five new wings, completed after he left) and his flamboyant bidding wars for acquisitions created the largest debt in the museum's history—$1.5 million in 1971—and led to the institution of "voluntary" admission fees. He boasted of his merchandising deals for sheets and towels, and claimed finally to have turned the museum into a modern business.

On the unequivocally positive side of the ledger, he restored the Great Hall to much of its original Beaux-Arts splen-

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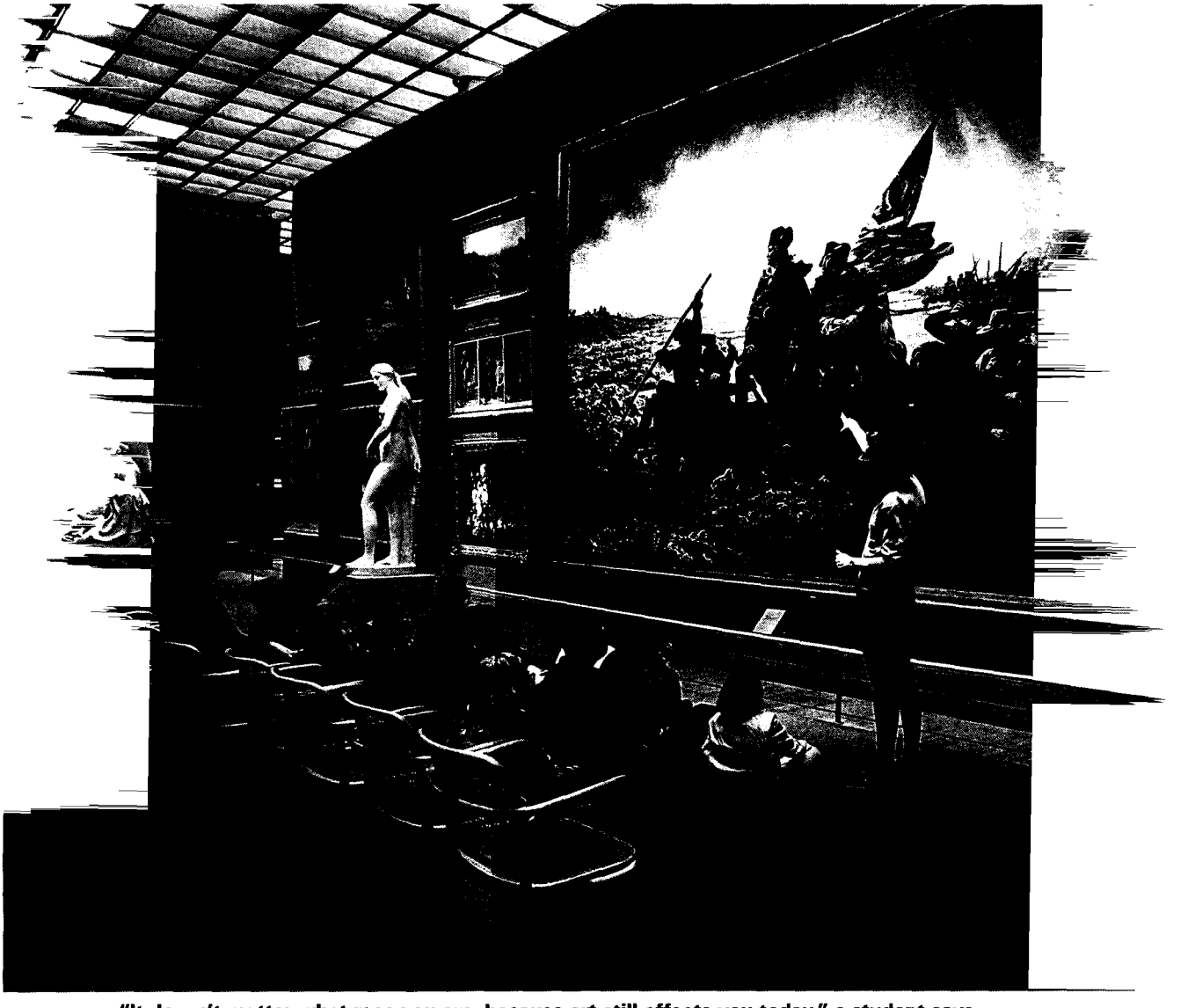

"It doesn't matter what race you are, because art still affects you today," a student says.

dor (and his perverse plan to tear down the majestic inner staircase blessedly came to naught). He created the great external stairs to the entrance and improved many of the museum's permanent installations. And for better or worse, he made the Met a must-see attraction.

But his preference for "razzmatazz" over scholarship even now provokes bitter feelings. Robert Rosenblum, a New York University art historian, recalls the furor when Hoving drastically shrunk a 1974 show on French painting from the Louvre, on the grounds that it was too scholarly. Two head curators resigned in protest. By the end of his tenure, antagonized curators were not answering their phones, out of the conviction that the imperiously dismissive Hoving had bugged them, says art critic and *New Criterion* editor Hilton Kramer. "There was a

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great sense of relief" when he left, observes Keith Christiansen, the Jayne Wrightsman Curator for European Paintings.

Hoving's influence outside the Met was if anything even greater than within it. By creating the expectation that going to an art museum means going to a big, highly publicized exhibit, Hoving of course made such exhibits *de rigueur*. Smaller museums without the clout to assemble blockbusters struggled to keep up. By casually throwing around terms like "dullness" to describe traditional art museums, he also helped shatter for good the already wobbly self-confidence that museums once had regarding their aesthetic mission. After Hoving's dismissal of quiet collections-gazing as outmoded, the mass entertainment juggernaut encountered almost no resistance.

Without consensus about their purpose, art museums today are stumbling off in different directions. Some cravenly worship at the altar of popular culture. Arnold Lehman, currently director of the Brooklyn Museum, mounted shows of jukeboxes, Dr. Seuss, and Looney Tunes cartoon characters when he ran the Baltimore Museum of Art. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts showed Star Wars props last year; the Brooklyn Museum will, too, in 2002. The South Carolina Art Museum has put on a hugely popular show of Elvis memorabilia. The Guggenheim asked Dennis Hopper to write the catalog essay for its blockbuster 1998 show on motorcycles.

BILL ORCUTT

The popular-culture rationale is this: if we sell museums like (or, eventually, with) popular culture, we can get people in to see the real stuff. The American Association of Museums reported enthusiastically in the early seventies that if you stage jazz concerts in a planetarium, for example, people say, "Hey, this is a groovy place," and may come back later for the planetarium show. No one knows if visitors lured by easy-viewing shows graduate to higher things, and the museum may forget about those things, too. The *New York Times* asked Guggenheim director Thomas Krens last year if new viewers of the motorcycle exhibit ever returned. Krens retorted defensively: "We don't tag them like whales and find them."

The second current trend is a cringing curatorial populism. Let the people do the curating! is a widespread doctrine. Heaven forbid that museums make value judgments or demonstrate specialized knowledge that the average Joe may not possess. That would be just so authoritarian! Better to open everything up to democratic decision making, however uninformed. The Wichita Art Museum hands out Xeroxes of visitor viewpoints. The Denver Art Museum asked visitors to rank a series of prints of women based on how "realistically" they portrayed the female sex. Instead of traditional wall labels, it has asked visitors: "If you like [or don't like] this painting, is it because . . . " with a list of possible answers to choose from. In the early 1990s, the Art Gallery of Ontario offered "reflective imaging exercises" that guided visitors into reveries regarding particular paintings, the better to help them explore their personal reactions, feelings, and memories. Taking the narcissism of the viewer to its logical conclusion, the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Virginia, provided a psychologist-led counseling session in 1998 for viewers of photos about married couples.

Many art-museum directors are terrified of the charge of elitism. Several years ago, Philippe de Montebello pilloried the director of a major American museum for saying: "It is essential to demystify the museum-going experience, to let people know we are not just some stuffy institution." As de Montebello rightly pointed out, the mystery of high creation is precisely what an art museum should celebrate.

This cheerful curatorial populism gives way to a more surly variety in the third museological current: the application of French post-structuralist and post-colonialist theory to "deconstruct" the museum's own aesthetic authority. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, MoMA, the Maryland Historical Society, and the Seattle Art Museum, among others, have mounted shows purporting to expose their own exhibition practices as racist, imperialist, classist, sexist, and intellectually arbitrary.

Deconstructive dourness never stays put, however, so of course the deconstructive acid seeped over from museum practices to high art itself. Art-histo-

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ry schools today embrace revisionism as a moral duty. They analyze art as an ideological tool of the ruling classes, believing, presumably, that they are thereby laying the groundwork for the revolution. The most infamous museum example of this cutting-edge art history was the "West as America" show mounted at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art in 1991. The curator pinned up boilerplate academic screeds against capitalism and white privilege under canvases of the American West, often to hilarious result. In one of its few lapses, the Met itself labeled nineteenth-century American landscapes and genre scenes in 1994 as ideological masks concealing labor unrest and economic inequities.

The final feature of today's museum confusion is the dominance of identity politics and "diversity" ideology. The American Association of Museums sports the usual identity-based subgroups—the Alliance for Gay and Lesbian Concerns, the AIDS Network, the Asian-Pacific and the Latino Networks, and so on. The College Art Association awards fellowships based on race, religion, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or history of economic disadvantage, as if any of those categories were relevant to one's aptitude for understanding and communicating about art. The *Boston Globe*, summing up the spirit of the moment, ran a four-part series in 1991 called "The Fine Arts: A World without Color," absurdly charging that the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Symphony Orchestra were "elitist citadels," since they didn't use racial double standards in hiring and aesthetic decisions.

The diversity movement reached its most perfect expression in the AAM's 1992 report, "Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums," which distilled the anti-intellectual, anti-knowledge vapors of the previous 30 years into a purely racial essence. If the academic disciplines that traditionally lead to museum work don't yield enough black or women candidates for curatorships, announces the report, then museums should recruit outside those disciplines, effectively eliminating artistic or scientific knowledge as a prerequisite for curating. What use are the traditional museum functions of "preservation, scholarship, and exhibition" if carried out "independent of the social context in which they exist?" the report asks. Racial correctness, in other words, must be the touchstone of all that museums do.

The museum is New York City's Number One tourist attraction.

This report leads directly to Brooklyn's "Hip-Hop Nation: Roots, Rhymes, and Rage," an exhibit of such paraphernalia of inner-city teen culture as rap music and graffiti. It is the saddest manifestation of the diversity ideology I have ever seen. I spoke to a willowy girl from Adelphi University visiting the show one day for her anthropology course. The syllabus had ordered her to find a gallery exhibit that "touches on your own sense of ethnicity," then to answer the question: "Do you feel valorzed [*sic*]?" This is a pathetic question for a college course, and it is equally pathetic that the museum world is playing right into the idea that education is about personal "valorization," rather than learning about something outside of the self.

Nevertheless, Brooklyn Museum director Arnold Lehman offers a therapeutic rationale for the show. I asked him: Is the most important thing blacks learn from "Hip-Hop Nation" that the Brooklyn Museum of Art cares about them? In a word, yes. "We are saying we value this material, we value you, we value the people who have made this culture part of world culture," Lehman explains. "Everyone's ideas, values, and attitudes are valuable," he adds. That blacks might learn anything about art from the show, of course, is something Lehman does not dare suggest.

"Hip-Hop Nation" offers up the ordinary detritus of commercialized popular culture like precious remnants from a lost civilization. Vitrines carefully display and annotate designer sunglasses, Tommy Hilfiger parkas, magazine covers, sneakers, and baseball caps. Conspicuous consumption may be crass in whites, but in inner-city blacks it is expressive and interesting. "The pursuit of the perfect sneaker . . . reflects the importance of labels in hip-hop fashion," gush-

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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While other museums stage hip-hop or motorcycle shows, the Met displays great art.

es a vitrine marked "Accessories." "If gold is good, more is better," adds another label.

So how else do you demonstrate to an ethnic group that you care? In this case, by romanticizing or excusing bigotry and vandalism if committed by the target group. Those rappers who portray women as animals to be violated at will, says the show, have had those sentiments forced upon them by American society. Under a heading delicately phrased, "Gender Issues in Hip-Hop," the exhibit explains that "inner city men have used hip-hop to express and empower themselves in the face of racism and classism, substandard school systems, and a lack of meaningful job opportunities. But because hip-hop is a subculture of the larger American society, it is little wonder that the

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same patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny that permeate all levels of mainstream America are also omnipresent in hip-hop."

The show includes a graffiti-smeared door, covered with bright pink, green, and blue dots. The wall label purports to take a neutral stance toward graffiti—"For some, it was a symbol of vitality, for others a symbol of urban decay and a society gone astray"—but a "graffiti masterclass" offered by the museum was not so cautious. Graffiti veteran Lee Quinones compared the subway system's war on graffiti to "a kind of genocide."

I asked Arnold Lehman if graffiti was art. "Absolutely," he shot back without hesitation. Would it be allowed to stay on the walls of the Brooklyn Museum? "We are not a studio in which to create art," he said primly (and incorrectly, as it turns out: the day I visited the hip-hop show, a group of students were happily sketching in the museum's Rodin galleries on the fifth floor). Where then is an appropriate spot for graffiti? I asked Lehman. "I think we're getting into another subject," he answered, closing off that line of inquiry.

BILL ORCUTT

Visitors to "Hip-Hop Nation" may attend gallery tours led by "young scholars" (in reality, teenage and young adult hip-hop fans). Heated discussions break out over whether the actor Will Smith or white rapper Vanilla Ice should be included in the hip-hop pantheon. These pressing matters are undoubtedly debated in school lunchrooms across the country, but it is hard to understand why the Brooklyn Museum of Art finds them part of its educational mission.

What makes "Hip-Hop Nation" so heartbreaking is that the museum continues to create shows of unimpeachable beauty and interest. Its American watercolors show from its own collection several years ago was unforgettable. Its more recent William Merritt Chase and Martin Johnson Heade shows were nearly as rich. Concurrent with "Hip-Hop Nation" was an elegant display of Scythian goldwork with superb wall texts. The museum continues to demonstrate what it is capable of, even as it betrays its mission of cultural uplift in a desperate search for bigger audiences.

Into this depressing mix of wayward institutions comes the Metropolitan Museum under Philippe de Montebello, more perfectly realizing its founders' hopes for democratic high culture than ever before in its history. Since he became acting director in 1977 and director a year later, show after show has won unequivocal acclaim for uncompromised aesthetic and scholarly standards. This past year alone saw New York's first exhibit of the still-life painter Jean-Simeon Chardin, a *tour de force* of understatement and elegance; portraits by Ingres; the relatively unknown mummy portraits from Roman Egypt; the definitely unknown (at least to American audiences) late Gothic sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider, whose striking figures have faces of haunting individuality. Past shows that are still talked about include "Van Eyck to Brueghel," "Rembrandt, Not Rembrandt," and celestial gold-ground Renaissance paintings from Siena.

De Montebello's gallery reinstallations are an even more important benchmark of his tenure. Hilton Kramer calls the new, light-filled, architecturally grand, and historically lucid Greek and Roman galleries "one of the greatest contributions to civilization." The Islamic and Chinese collections have been beautifully re-displayed. The museum just opened up a fascinating arched space under the grand staircase for Coptic art as part of its new Byzantine galleries.

These successes are the products of a coherent philosophy diametrically opposed to reigning art-museum orthodoxies. "Elitism is the very essence of democracy, in that it seeks to bring as many people as possible to a higher level of understanding and appreciation," de Montebello told *The New Yorker* in 1997. One hundred years ago, such sentiments would have been unremarkable; today, they sound as wildly anachronistic as they are true.

De Montebello daringly believes that there are hierarchies of aesthetic merit; a museum's job is to select the best and present it beautifully to the public. He cast icy skepticism on the trend toward populist curating last year in the *New York Times*: "The notion of opening to popular suffrage decisions that require a great deal of knowledge and discrimination is one that I don't understand," he said.

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Urbanities

A backslapper de Montebello is not. Well born into a Parisian family with art-world connections, he retains a certain hyper-civilized European *hauteur* toward strangers. Seated at a large round table in his new fifth-floor office, the director bristles at the suggestion that he is a lone voice of excellence. "I'm not as unique as all that," he says impatiently. "What distinguishes me is that what I say is printed." Wearing a three-piece, impeccably quiet glen plaid suit with an equally understated orange-flecked tie, he stretches his hands out before him and leans forward: "If I were the director of the Guggenheim, would I run it as the Met?" he asks rhetorically. "No: I'd run it into the ground in five years." The Met, he points out, provides him with freedom that other directors don't necessarily enjoy. "If I don't want to do restaurants, I don't have to. I don't have to worry about attracting an audience."

Despite de Montebello's protestations of non-uniqueness, he views his role, he says, as "putting the brakes on museums that do, rather than museums that are." Museums are becoming "hyperactive," with a focus on process, not product. Imitating mass entertainment may bring short-term popularity, but in the long term, "you've set yourself up for failure," he maintains. "You're not in the entertainment business. There will be limits on the number of people you can bring in." The "hyperactive" strategy, moreover, is a betrayal of mission. "If you don't work to emphasize and valorize what makes you different, you have abdicated a fundamental responsibility," de Montebello believes.

A "perverse" reversal of priorities has occurred over the last 20 years, de Montebello observes. When museums still functioned as retreats for the "cognoscenti," the "budget was totally in support of the program." Now the program is beginning to support the budget, "in an insidious way."

He set out to change that, by reining in the public's expectation for blockbusters and the museum's incentives for mounting them. He abolished the special fee that the Met once charged, and virtually all other museums still do charge, for temporary exhibits. The fee sends a message to audiences: the exhibition is more important than the permanent collection. It also tempts museums to mount shows based on their box-office potential.

De Montebello has staged more and more shows drawn exclusively from the museum's own collections, such as the popular "Van Eyck to Brueghel," some of whose contents even the curators of European painting had never seen. "The permanent collections are the most important thing. They're what a museum is all about," de Montebello said upon leaving the Metropolitan Museum in 1969 to run the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. "Exhibitions are a passing sensation." He has made his case. The highly regarded in-house millennial show, "The Year One," juxtaposing masterpieces from the five leading world civilizations at the time of the birth of Christ, could only have been put together in a museum with collections of the depth and breadth of the Met's.

De Montebello gave the curators back their professional integrity, and they repay him with devotion. They brag about the museum's scholarly catalogs, which often win prizes for art-historical research. Walter Liedtke curated the upcoming "Vermeer and the Delft School" show. The 250-page catalog Liedtke originally proposed ballooned to 640 pages, with five essays by Liedtke, and three others by different specialists, along with a 25-page bibliography. "When this daunting prospect emerged without a corporate patron lined up," recalls Liedtke admiringly, "Philippe said: 'It's not about the profit margin, but the research, and doing it right.' "

The curators cheered de Montebello's facing down Karl Lagerfeld last year as a vindication of the museum's independence. The Met was planning a major retrospective of Coco Chanel's couture. Lagerfeld, current head of Chanel, insisted on including in the show contemporary installation artist Jenny Holzer, with her brain-dead sloganeering—or at the very least some video artists. "I'm not interested in an exhibit that's just old dresses," Lagerfeld breezily announced. When the designer refused to back down, de Montebello canceled the show, charging that Lagerfeld's demands were unaccept-

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ably eroding curatorial authority. Predictably, the *New York Times*'s head art critic, Michael Kimmelman, complained that the Met was not sufficiently "attuned to contemporary culture" and lacked "fresh ideas."

The Met refuses to pander to multicultural sensitivity with dumbed-down, color-coded shows. "No sentient being will not find his heritage under this roof," de Montebello says emphatically. Yet the museum wins the approval of the city's schoolchildren, anyway, simply by pursuing the color-blind path of excellence. One day last November, the seventh-grade class from Intermediate School 125 in the Bronx was visiting "Art and the Empire City," a show of fine and decorative arts marking New York's antebellum rise as a national power. Several girls are standing in front of a still life of a porcelain bowl and partially peeled lemon. "You like it?" asks a guard. "It's wonderful," they exclaim. "It's so real."

I question two of the enthusiasts further. "These artists is very artistic; they're unique," raves Shanell Thomas, 13. Vonice Santos, 11, in pigtails, recalls coming to the Met two years ago with her family. "It's better when you're alone [i.e., not with your classmates], because you get to see a lot of paintings, and get to think about the pictures." She adds philosophically: "If you come two times, you never see the same picture the same way."

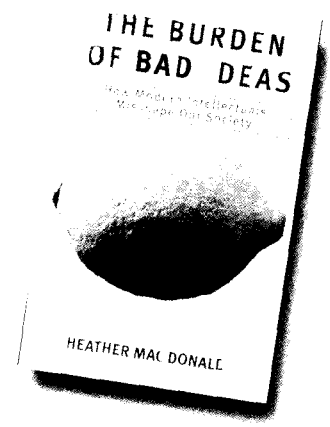
The class assignment today is to pick a favorite object from the show and write about it. These two girls are partial to an Andreas Achenbach seascape. "It's one of the best so far." But they add judiciously: " 'Modern Rome' is interesting—how he got all those paintings in." Not to be too exclusive, they generously acknowledge: "The sculptures, they look nice, too." The girls laugh when I tell them of Brooklyn's hip-hop show, and they express a wish to see it. But in response to the million-dollar question—do exhibits have to be color-specific?—they are firmly in the aesthete's camp. "It doesn't matter what race you are, because art still affects you today," Vonice announces.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is New York's number-one tourist attraction, its glittering gift to the world. It is a beacon of excellence that proves the Founders' wager: if you build a temple to high culture, the public will not only come, it will revel in it. High culture may be under attack on every politically correct campus and trendy newspaper arts page in the nation, but the Met's success is a resounding vindication both of high art's unquenchable power and the inextinguishable appeal of democratic elitism. ■

The upside-down world of public policy, and how it got that way

The Burden of Bad Ideas:
How Modern Intellectuals Misshape Our Society
by Heather Mac Donald

One of the best of our urban journalists considers the upside-down world of public policy and the entrenchment of foolish ideas in closely reported stories from the streets of New York to the seats of intellectual power. "If there were any justice in the world, Mac Donald would be knee-deep in Pulitzer Prizes and National Magazine Awards for her pioneering work."
—David Brooks



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Urbanities

America the Beautiful

Norman Podhoretz

According to one of the few truly great American poets of the past century, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." But Robert Frost could well have applied the same image to America itself. America is so special a country that a whole theory was invented to account for its many differences from other nations: the theory of "American exceptionalism." And this very exceptionalism, I think, is what renders Frost's image relevant to the attitude so many people have taken toward the United States. No doubt about it: Something there is that doesn't love America.

In fact, even in this very hostility to the country, we have an instance of American exceptionalism. Consider: Englishmen have never been lacking who dislike, or even hate, Germany or France or any and all foreigners: "The wogs begin at Calais," as the old saying has it. Indians hate Pakistanis; Turks hate Greeks; Arabs hate Israelis—and so on through the long and miserable catalog of interstate animosities and bigotries.

Yet easy as it is to find people who hate other countries, it is hard to find Englishmen or Indians or Arabs who hate their *own* countries. My favorite illustration is the British philosopher Bertrand Russell. Leftist political radical though he was, Russell could nevertheless say that love of England was "very nearly the strongest emotion I possess." Therefore, whenever he objected to anything England had done, Russell never condemned the country as a whole, but only the particular policy in question or the government then in power. This was the case even when, as a vehement opponent of the First World War, he campaigned against conscription and landed himself in jail. Sitting there, this radical pacifist later wrote, "I was . . . tortured by patriotism. The successes of the Germans at the Marne were horrible to me. I desired the defeat of Germany as ardently as any retired colonel."

But if Russell was in love with his own country, he grew to hate America with an obversely equivalent passion. In this, he was no different from other famous European intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre, who joined him in staging a show trial convicting America for committing war crimes in Vietnam (crimes, incidentally, that were never committed—but that is another story for another day).

Nothing unusual here. But what *was* unusual about this trial, and other phenomena like it, is that *Americans* were among the prosecutors posing as judges. These Americans were by no means alone in their wholesale condemnation of America, whose name they and others like them began to spell with a "k" to suggest that it was no different from Nazi Germany. And if we were no different from Nazi Germany, we were certainly no better—and probably worse—than the communists, whether in Hanoi or Havana, in Moscow or Beijing. This idea became famous as the doctrine of "moral equivalence."

Not all the people who compared us invidiously with the Soviet Union or other communist countries were communists. Far from it. Many were just plain old vanilla liberals. Nor was this kind of anti-Americanism a passing phase peculiar to the 1960s or a spillover of the rage against our presence in Vietnam. On the contrary: although Vietnam certainly acted like gasoline poured on a smoldering campfire, the native anti-Americanism that fueled the resulting ideological forest fire had a long history and deep roots in our culture.

In the particular and highly virulent outbreak of anti-Americanism in the sixties, the main carriers of course, were the radical left and its sympathizers within the broader liberal community. As for its intellectual source, that could be traced to an indiscriminately ecumenical combination of socialist, anarchist, and progressivist thought.

And yet a long history of anti-Americanism also exists on the American right. It goes back to the decades immediately after the Civil War that have become known as the Gilded Age, and it is still alive in certain quarters today. So here, too, we have another sign of American "exceptionalism." For everywhere else on the earth, it is taken for granted that conservatives will be nationalistic, even to a fault. Everywhere else on the earth, duty, honor, country, and the qualities that make for military excellence are associated with the right, which often venerates the

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BROWN BROTHERS STOCK PHOTO

The Founding Fathers' idea, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, of a nation dedicated to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," gave birth to one of the world's greatest civilizations.

flag flying over the nation almost to the point of idolatry.

What makes the phenomenon of anti-Americanism, whether foreign or native, so curious and puzzling is that it is directed against a civilization with a very strong claim to be listed among the greatest known to recorded human history. I believe—with all my heart as well as with all my mind—that the United States of America is comparable in stature to fifth-century Athens, to Renaissance Italy, to Elizabethan England.

All these civilizations were imperfect, and, from some points of view, worse than imperfect. After all, fifth-century Athens countenanced slavery. And as for the social and political conditions in Italy during the Renaissance and in England during the Elizabethan age, they make the condition of the poor in America against which so much moral rage is directed seem comparable to the privileges and luxuries of the rich of those earlier times.

To be sure, just about everyone admits that these old civilizations are high points of human history and therefore deserve forgiveness for their sins. By contrast, hardly anyone—especially among intellectuals and academics—accords the same

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exculpatory status to the United States. Why? What accounts for this refusal both on the left and (admittedly to a much lesser extent) on the right to acknowledge what I think ought to be an obvious truth, a platitude?

The answer begins with the difference between the grounds for placing the United States on the list of the greatest civilizations and the reasons that have earned the others their place on that list. All the others are there mainly because of the great works of art and intellect they produced, from Sophocles and Plato to Michelangelo and Leonardo to Shakespeare and the King James Bible.

The United States has produced no works of art or philosophy on that level of sublimity—no "monuments of unaging intellect," as Yeats called them.

The Founding Fathers of this country—who, as *practical* political geniuses surely rank with the greatest of all political philosophers—were not thinking of how to design a country that would be especially conducive to the creation of "monuments of unaging intellect." They stated their intention forthrightly, early in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

There it is, spelled out for all to see—except for one detail. In Thomas Jefferson's original draft, the phrase was "the pursuit of property," which made perfect sense to a student of John Locke, who had taught that the foundation of personal liberty was private property. But Congress edited out the word "property" and substituted the much vaguer term "happiness." No matter. It was universally understood that the new country placed a very high value on material things and material advancement.

Worse yet—or, in my judgment, better yet—Jefferson and his colleagues made no invidious distinctions between these material things and the things of the spirit. There was a direct line connecting the pursuit of material happiness (or property) in this earthly life with the spiritual state of liberty (not to mention the moral disciplines of religion). Furthermore, each of the three components, or "blessings," as the Declaration later describes them, depended on the other two. But even worse—or, yet again in my judgment, better—these blessings were to be made available to "all men."

Yes, yes, I know: "all men" did not mean all men. Slaves were excluded, and so—in a far less drastic sense—were women. But the *principle* was established, and in due course the principle prevailed and successfully demanded to be realized in action, as the Founding Fathers understood very well that it would.

"I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just," said Jefferson, a slaveholder, in speaking of slavery. But while he knew enough to tremble, I doubt that even Jefferson could have anticipated that it would take the bloodiest of any war Americans would ever fight to rectify this monstrous injustice. Like the other Founding Fathers, however, he was also wise enough to recognize that any attempt to abolish slavery at that time would have made it impossible to form the new nation. I hope it will not seem offensive if I say that giving way to this noxious necessity was yet another mark of the great practical political genius of the Founders.

From the very first, hostility was attracted both from home and abroad by the new nation to which the Declaration of Independence and the travails of the Revolutionary War gave birth. But once the Constitution had been written and ratified, the formerly loyal colonial subjects of King George lost their tongues, and there was no longer any hostility of any importance from within. That came later, when yet another new nation, genetically related to the first but bearing radically new features of its own, was born out of the travails of the Civil War.

At this point, I cannot resist quoting a passage from Henry Adams I have often quoted before, because it so marvelously captures both the nature of foreign hostility and the early American response to it.

Describing the general European attitude toward the America of 1800, Adams wrote: "No foreigner of that day—neither poet, painter, nor philosopher—could detect in American life anything higher than vulgarity." Adams was especially irked by the fact that even Wordsworth, the leading English poet of the day, "could do no better, when

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THE GRANGER COLLECTION (2)

In today's interconnected world, even George Washington, who warned against foreign entanglements, would acknowledge that American power should help spread the blessings of liberty to foreign lands.

he stood in the face of American democracy, than 'keep the secret of a poignant scorn.' "

Yet, Adams went on, "Wordsworth might have convinced himself by a moment's thought that no country could act on the imagination as America acted upon the instincts of the ignorant and poor, without some quality that deserved better treatment than poignant scorn." And what was this quality to which Wordsworth had blinded himself, but that, Adams said, "the poorest peasant in Europe" could discern? Here is how Adams, in his baroque prose style, described the quality in question: "The hard, practical money-getting American democrat, . . . who inhabited cold shades where fancy sickened and where genius died, was in truth living in a world of dream, and acting a drama more instinct with poetry than all the avatars of the east, walking in gardens of emeralds and rubies, in ambition already ruling the world and guiding Nature with a kinder and wiser hand than had ever yet been felt in human history." To these poor peasants, Adams declared, the Americans of 1800 beckoned, inviting them to "Come and share our limitless riches! Come and help us bring to light these unimaginable stores of wealth and power!"

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Yet this same Henry Adams—the direct descendant of two American presidents, and a conservative if ever there was one—turned with savage ferocity against the same invitation when it was extended to a later generation of the same poor peasants by the Americans of the 1870s and the 1880s. As he saw it, now adopting the scorn he had once scorned in Wordsworth, the country had been ruined by an alliance of bankers like J. P. Morgan, industrialists like Jay Gould, and the urban political machines that collectively acquired the name of the one in New York, Tammany. In his eyes and in those of many other American patricians, Tammany existed only to cater to the immigrant hordes being imported as cheap labor by what Adams's counterparts on the left scornfully called "the robber barons."

As to these putative "robber barons," the marvelous British historian Paul Johnson recently posed a powerful question. "This collection of entrepreneurial individualists," wrote Johnson, "transformed a predominantly agricultural society into an industrial and financial superstate," bringing to the American people "an affluence never dreamed of before. So whom did the barons rob?"

Johnson's incisive question can be matched with many similar ones. For anti-Americanism has not merely fed on politically tendentious, bigoted, and often ignorant assessments of our economic history; it has also drawn nourishment from the idea that the prelapsarian Henry Adams so gorgeously refuted: the idea that Americans cared about nothing but money, or as a once famous literary critic put it, the country had no purpose "beyond the aggregation of force in the form of wealth." In the so-called Gilded Age that followed the Civil War, Adams, having forgotten the defense he had written against that very charge, turned into an American version of Thersites, the character in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* who does nothing but snarl and rail and curse at the leaders of his fellow Greeks in the Trojan War. Adams similarly now joined in the raucous chorus hurling imprecations against the vulgarity, the philistinism, and the puritanism of what on the anti-American left would soon be described as "bourgeois" society, and what on the anti-American right, both here and in Europe, was and still is known as middle-class values.

Well, what about this particular congeries of curses? To begin with the arts, as I have already indicated, there is no point in denying that America has rarely reached the level of the greatest periods of European culture. Yet I would maintain—though it, too, is another story for another day—that we have done far better in that department than I was taught to believe when I was a student half a century ago. Indeed, we have even done better than we might have been expected to do in a system deliberately designed to achieve other objectives.

As for the charge of philistinism, I can only say that this indictment never took the slightest account of the poignantly humble American veneration for the arts and scholarship that manifested itself even in the Gilded Age. How else do we explain the proliferation of universities, research institutes, libraries, museums, and art galleries that the "robber barons" themselves endowed—even though America had, as Henry James complained, "no Epsom, no Ascot"? And remember, they did it all without the incentive of tax relief, since no taxes to speak of existed in that far-off age that was in this respect more golden than gilded.

Finally, as to puritanism, some of us think that, whatever might have been the case in the past, we could use a little more of it today. But that is yet a third story for another time.

Thus far, I have been trying to show that the hostility toward this country has based itself on two main ideas. On the left, both at home and abroad, the primary charge is that the American economic system is unjust. On the right, also both at home and abroad, the primary charge is that American culture is degraded. And at times, the two sides merge, each fusing the other's major preoccupation to its own.

Some of the critics who hurl these charges are driven by false ideologies or utopian greed; others are consumed by envy; and still others are sickened by the feeling that they have been robbed by the vulgar hordes of the positions of leadership to which their self-evident superiority entitles them. But the greater and higher truth than any

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Lincoln's Address at the Dedication of the Gettysburg National Cemetery, November 19, 1863.

Fourscore and seven years ago our Fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor powers to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under GOD, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

The single most revolutionary idea of the American experiment, as Lincoln emphasized at Gettysburg, was that all men are created equal, and all must be treated as individuals, regardless of race or creed.

they have propounded about the United States is that the American economic system and the American culture in which it is rooted have created a society in which there is *more* liberty and *more* prosperity than human beings have ever enjoyed in any other place or any other time. I am here to maintain that these blessings are more widely shared than even the most visionary utopians ever imagined possible. And I am here to submit that this is an immense achievement, and that *it* is what entitles the United States of America to an honored place on the roster of the greatest civilizations the world has ever known.

Today, our first imperative, in my view, should be to re-educate ourselves about the nature of this country. Without recognizing that we live in a society in which more liberty and more prosperity are more widely shared than by any other society in human history, we will be unable to relearn what so many of us have forgotten, or perhaps never even knew: the nature of the principles that shaped the establishment of the United States, and why and how those principles, embodied in institutions and put into action, have produced the magnificent result they have.

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Conversely, we need to recognize when, how, and why we have lost faith in those principles and institutions, and therefore departed from them. We need to understand what has driven us to go whoring after strange political gods and to forsake a legacy of traditions on which the American achievement rested. I will restrict myself to two examples, one domestic and one involving foreign affairs.

The domestic example is the policy of preferential treatment for minority groups. Even many opponents of this policy often fail to realize that it violates the single most revolutionary idea of the American Revolution and the one that more than any other enabled it to achieve its objectives to an extent that neither the French nor Russian revolutions ever could. The idea to which I refer is that individuals are to be treated *as* individuals, in accordance with their own merits, without regard—in the old formula so many of us were reared on—to race, creed, color, or country of national origin.

This idea had worked brilliantly in Americanizing millions of immigrants in the past and in keeping the peace among them when other ethnically and religiously heterogeneous societies were more often than not tearing themselves apart and drowning in blood. Yet because it seemed not to be working for the blacks—though Thomas Sowell, among others, has argued persuasively that it *was* beginning to take hold—it has been abandoned in favor of treating individuals as members of a group. In other words, we have discarded an American tradition that has resulted mainly in wonders and imported an alien practice that has resulted mainly in murder.

Here we have a striking case of the damage that is done by departing from our tested traditional way of conducting our affairs. And the irony is that many of us do not even perceive that the new policy is a departure at all.

This same species of ignorance—or, to use a more charitable term, this same bout of amnesia—was responsible for the widespread failure to understand (and therefore to articulate precisely) what we were defending in the cold war, and why it was worth defending. I believe that failure is still in evidence among us. Many deride the slogan associated with Woodrow Wilson: that our job is to make the world safe for democracy. But I for one see nothing wrong with it as a brief summation of our proper role in world affairs.

True, there was a time when, protected by oceans at either end of the continent, and sheltering under the guns of the British navy, we could safely avoid the foreign entanglements against which George Washington warned. Yet I daresay even Washington, if he were living today, would acknowledge that the speed of communications on the one hand and of missiles on the other make foreign entanglements and involvement in wars fought in distant places unavoidable.

Nevertheless, the voices calling for protectionism are still loud among us. The voices either opposing missile defense, or paying only politically expedient lip service to it, are still loud among us. The voices denying that American military power has declined dangerously, thereby inviting aggression, are still loud among us. And the voices are still loud among us denouncing the idea that American power and influence be used to help create a world in which the political and economic blessings we enjoy are more and more widely spread beyond our own borders.

Of course, this must be done prudently, and, of course, it cannot be done at all where certain prior conditions do not yet exist. But to help create a world safe for democracy is to follow a policy that seamlessly fuses our bedrock principles with our self-interest.

Our Founding Fathers declared that they were creating a system that would not only enshrine the rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but that would also "secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." It is we who are their posterity, and therefore it is now our sacred duty to secure those same rights and those same blessings to our own posterity. But I say again that before we can do so, we have to educate ourselves properly. Only then can we educate our posterity as to the true nature of the blessings of liberty. And only then will our own children and grandchildren fully understand why they should be joining us in giving daily thanks to our Founding Fathers and to "the laws of nature and of nature's God" that our Founders set us so incandescent an example in following with such beautiful fidelity. ■

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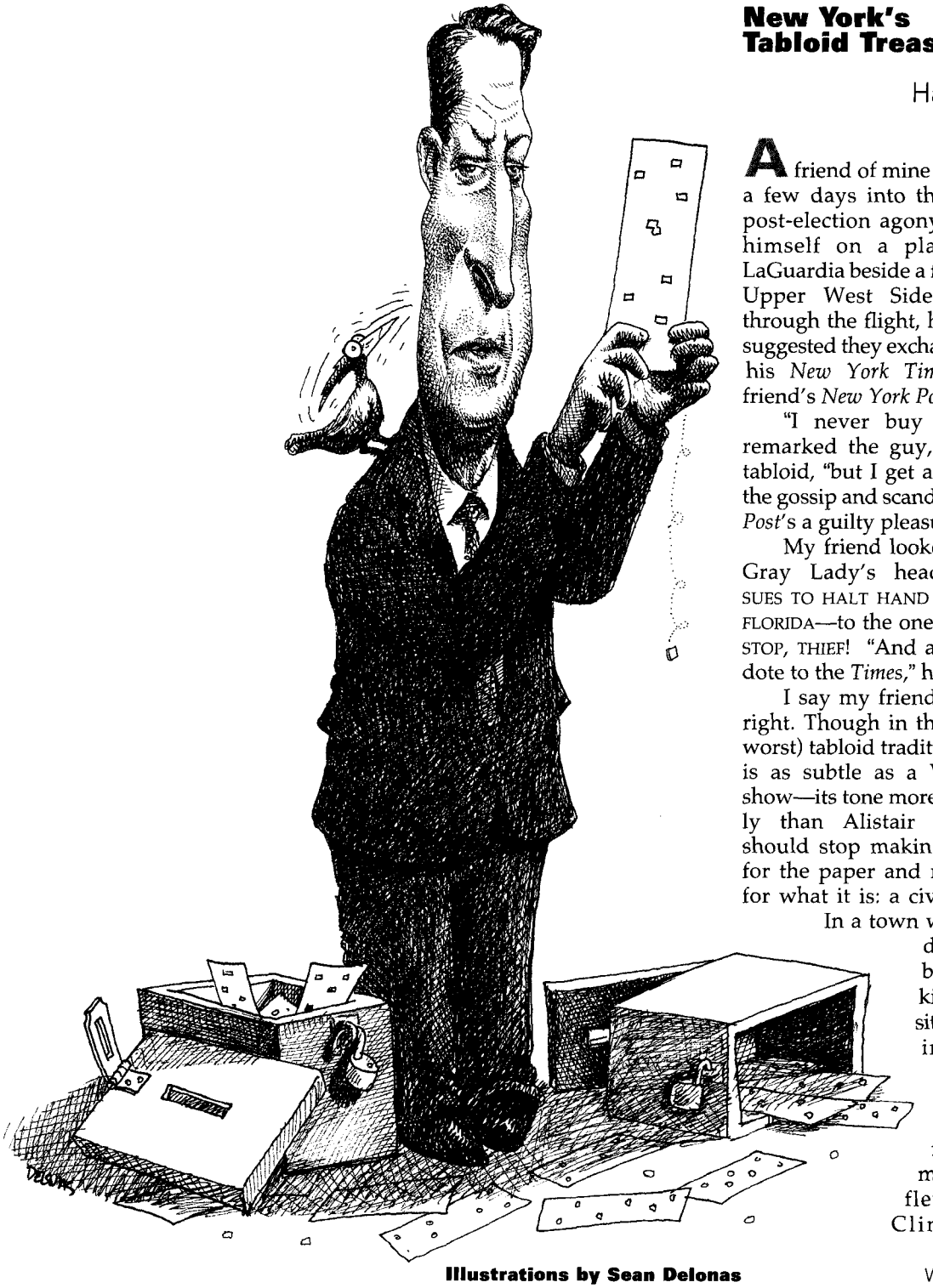

New York's Tabloid Treasure

Harry Stein

A friend of mine reports that a few days into the extended post-election agony, he found himself on a plane out of LaGuardia beside a forty-fiveish Upper West Sider. Midway through the flight, his seatmate suggested they exchange papers, his *New York Times* for my friend's *New York Post*.

"I never buy it myself," remarked the guy, taking the tabloid, "but I get a kick out of the gossip and scandal stuff. The *Post*'s a guilty pleasure."

My friend looked from the Gray Lady's headline—BUSH SUES TO HALT HAND RECOUNT IN FLORIDA—to the one in the *Post*: STOP, THIEF! "And also an antidote to the *Times*," he replied.

I say my friend had it just right. Though in the best (and worst) tabloid tradition, the *Post* is as subtle as a Vegas floor show—its tone more Bill O'Reilly than Alistair Cooke—we should stop making apologies for the paper and recognize it for what it is: a civic treasure.

In a town whose other dailies celebrate every kind of diversity except the intellectual kind—and in an era when the meaning of morality is as flexible as a Clinton-Gore

Illustrations by Sean Delonas

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Democrat's concept of the rule of law—the *Post*, in its noisy, irreverent, often over-the-top way, stands out as an oasis of good sense.

For an increasing number of us, the *Post* is a daily essential, reflecting our attitudes and values in ways the holier-than-thou *Times*, obsessed with social and moral fashion, would scorn to do. Nor has the tabloid ever been so vital as in the ethical chaos of the Clinton-Gore years. "These days," as my friend puts it, "I actually flaunt my affection for the *Post*. What better way to tick off the terminally smug?"

It goes without saying that those on the other side of the political and cultural divide are clueless about the paper's appeal to anyone with an IQ north of 90. With a history of bizarre sensational headlines stretching back to the seventies—HEADLESS BODY IN TOPLESS BAR, ran one classic—and with its continuing enthusiasm for stories featuring sex and mayhem, the *Post* is easy to caricature; and its detractors, including many who labor at more conventionally respectable media outlets, do so with reflexive relish. Across the city, the politically correct love to dismiss it as a sort of daily *National Enquirer*—only worse, for having an editorial side that's pre-Neanderthal.

Of course, some committed liberals do continue to read the *Post*, if only by force of habit. Most are holdovers from the pre-1983 days, when, under publisher Dorothy Schiff and editorial page editor James Wechsler, it was by far the most liberal paper in town, its opinion page for years home to Eleanor Roosevelt herself. But now, with an eye toward their blood pressure, these readers tend to navigate past the editorial pages, heading instead to the celebrity gossip on Page Six or the excellent sports section. For those inhabiting America's most politically correct precincts, today's *Post* is more than just a source of pitiless aggravation; it speaks the vilest kind of sacrilege, challenging—*mocking*—contemporary liberalism's guiding assumptions. In an era of rampant relativism, on issue after contentious issue—from the Brooklyn Museum's *Sensation* exhibition to bilingual education, from homosexual scoutmasters to feel-good multicultural history—the paper confidently makes the case for standards and the sustaining power of tradition, unapologetically asserting conservatism's claim to the moral high ground.

Little wonder that on the *Times* opinion pages, virtually every reference to *Post* proprietor Rupert Murdoch or his paper comes laced with venom. But of course what truly gets to the broadsheet's mandarins is that their fury is to so little effect. Indeed, as the *Times*'s readership has continued to erode, the *Post* is the only daily in the nation whose circulation has actually risen (if usually only slightly) in every reporting period over the past six years.

That is, ever since Murdoch (who had owned the paper in the eighties and been forced to sell after acquiring a local TV outlet) was allowed to reassume control at the end of 1993, after a series of tragi-comic misadventures with would-be publishers had left the *Post* gasping for life. While much of the region celebrated the resurrection of the nation's oldest continually published paper, founded by Alexander Hamilton—even Mario Cuomo had played a key role in saving it, very likely to his regret—the very day Murdoch was back, the *Times* editorialized that "his purchase of the *Post* may save it as a daily, but there should be no illusions that he is a healthy influence on American journalism. . . . Mr. Murdoch's greatest sins have not been those against taste. His newspaper journalism has often been, at bottom, professionally and politically dishonest. He used his papers to grind the axes of his political buddies, to promote a reflexive conservatism and to make sensationalism rather than accuracy the animating principle of the news pages."

For Eric Breindel, then the *Post*'s lead editorialist, this was akin to a Margaret Dumont lob to Groucho. A more gifted thinker than the sober apparatchiks of the *Times*'s editorial board and an infinitely better writer, Breindel clearly saw the attack as an opening skirmish in a welcome war. An "important message permeates this smug diatribe," he wrote the very next day. "Indeed, the *Times* provides a key clue to the genesis of its animosity when it decries Murdoch 'for using his papers to promote a reflexive conservatism.'

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"Now, as it happens, Rupert Murdoch isn't 'reflexively' anything. But it is fair to say he doesn't hide his generally right-of-center ideological orientation. And he's allergic by nature to that which is deemed Politically Correct.

"Interestingly—as the *Times* editorial demonstrates—the liberals and leftists who dominate the American media universe can't face the fact that they too are likewise animated by ideological considerations. Those folks actually think that they—and the newspapers they produce—are entirely non-partisan and non-ideological.

"By their lights, conservative journalists are—ipso facto—ideologues; liberal editors and writers, on the other hand, believe that they, somehow, manage to check their ideological baggage at the door and carry out their journalistic duties in an entirely apolitical fashion. . . .

"Americans are expected to accept this fantasy at face value."

Breindel remained in place another five years, his influence such that when he died at 42, in 1998, conservatives across the country felt his loss keenly. His funeral service was very much a *Post* event: mingling with Henry Kissinger, Rudy Giuliani, George Pataki, and assorted former Harvard classmates of Breindel were a good number of ordinary readers. As each august eulogizer in turn stepped solemnly to the podium, one large, open-faced fellow in a ski jacket, carrying the *Star* as well as the *Post*, loudly asked from his seat a couple of rows behind the family, "Who's that?"

Though in Breindel's wake the *Post* remains a powerful redoubt of conservative thought and opinion, in fact it has never been quite as ideologically uniform as outsiders on both sides of the cultural divide assume. This being New York—and the journalism business—most of the paper's reporters and news editors tend to be, in their personal politics, decidedly liberal. One *Post* scribe, who confided in me that his dream job would be at *The New Yorker*, acknowledges he's often hesitant even to tell other journalists where he works. Another ruefully noted that when he applied for a job at the *Times*, "the first thing they asked was if I was hired pre- or post-Murdoch." Too bad for him: there are precious few holdovers from the Schiff days; the very last hire of the late liberal regime, conservative Eric Fettman, is happily ensconced as one of the paper's top editorialists.

But you can make a strong case that, on both the news and editorial sides, the *Post* takes the task of airing alternative viewpoints at least as seriously as do publications that make a fetish of diversity. During the Elián Gonzalez business, notwithstanding the paper's strongly anti-Castro tilt, columnist Douglas Montero, a liberal who sees himself as a voice for the disenfranchised, was in Havana beating the drums for the child's return to Cuba with the zeal of Fidel himself: he actually filed stories that used Cuban government documents as reliable sources. Gossip mavens Liz Smith and Cindy Adams both use their daily allotment of space to push liberal themes, with Cindy laying it on particularly thick for her pal Hillary Clinton. Ditto TV critic Linda Stasi. During the post-election chaos, columnist Sidney Zion, a *Times* and *News* vet in the regular-guy, street-smart Jimmy Breslin–Pete Hamill mode, could be found blasting away at the Bush team with all the snarly contempt of a West Palm oldster. Not least, there's metro columnist and onetime *Village Voice* heavy Jack Newfield, the most inveterate old-line leftist at any New York daily, at least as far to the left as his counterpart in the same department, my friend Rod Dreher, is on the right.

Still, let's not pretend: the *Post*'s ideological reputation is hardly unmerited. Day after day, in its news coverage as well as in the opinion sections, it offers a slant on events that goes against the usual media grain—occasionally enough to make a real difference. Think back on the paper's role in the controversy over the pro-homosexual "Children of the Rainbow" elementary-school curriculum in 1992; how, while the *Times* reflexively characterized curriculum opponents as unregenerate bigots, running pieces entitled BOOKS HELP CHILDREN OF GAY PARENTS and TEACHING ABOUT GAYS AND TOLERANCE, the *Post* gave a hearing to those, like District 24's Mary Cummins, who spoke to traditional religious beliefs and age appropriateness—which is to say, it covered the issue not only more equitably but with a far greater sense of nuance and sophistication. Only in the *Post* could you learn how

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deep and widespread among parents, including many minority parents, was the belief that to inflict *Daddy's Roommate* and *Heather Has Two Mommies* on six- and seven-year-olds was an assault upon their own most cherished values.

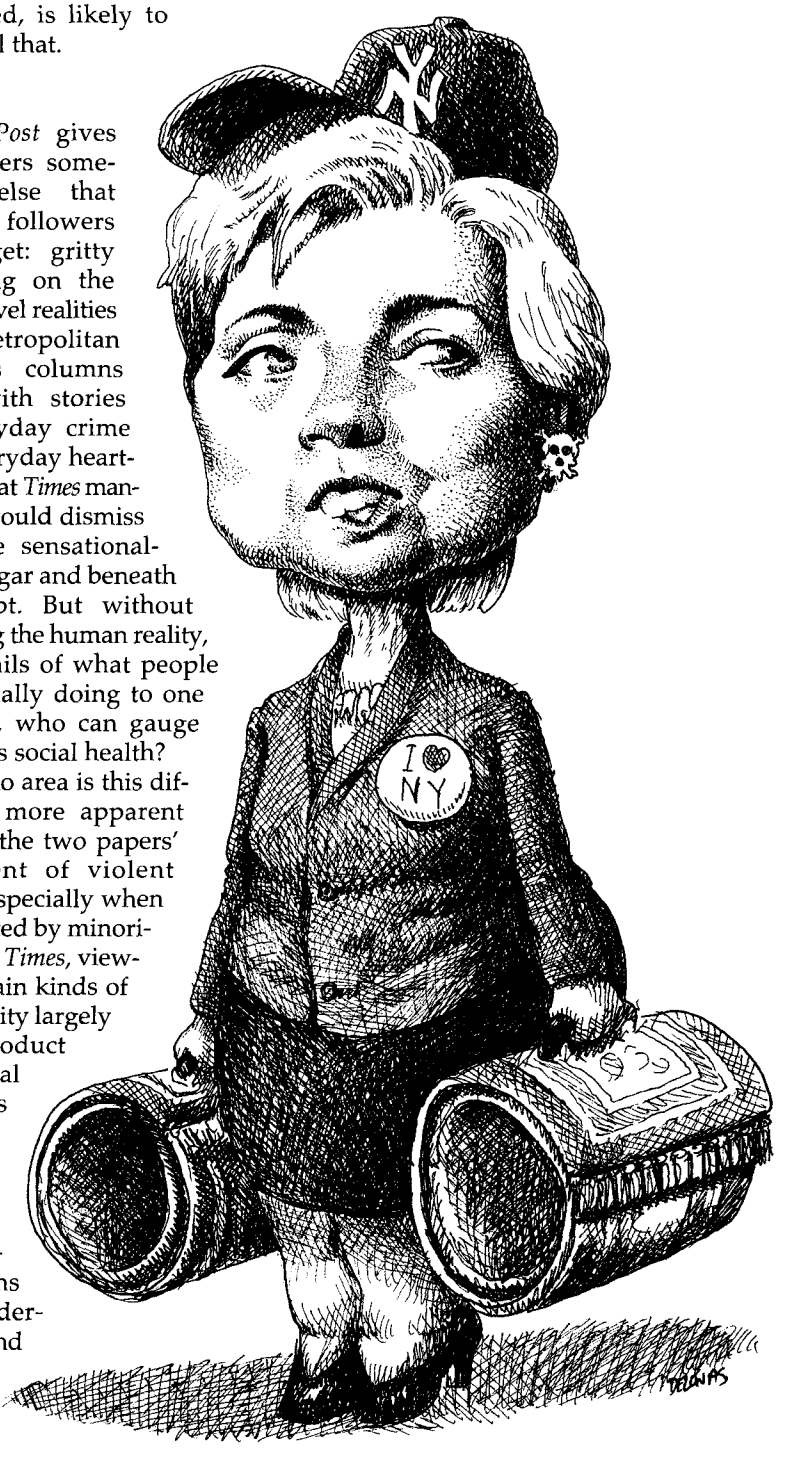
Then, too, just this past summer, none of the city's other papers, for all their ostensible concern with First Amendment issues, initially saw any news value in the MTA's summary rejection of pro-life ads for the subways. It was left to the *Post* to break and pursue the story, eventually leading to a lifting of the ban.

That, of course, is the dirty but increasingly blatant little secret in many newsrooms: that what's fit to print, and how to print it, is a highly subjective proposition. Many have drawn attention to the *Times*'s strategic use of story placement—how, for instance, during the recent presidential campaign, even when a story bearing on Al Gore's ethical lapses managed to make it into the paper, it would get buried in the corner of page A23. Such tactics help explain why, even today, many who get their news exclusively from the paper of record or NPR, let alone the broadcast networks, have only the dimmest awareness that someone named Juanita Broaddrick lodged a highly credible accusation of rape against Bill Clinton or that the open-ended sexual harassment statute that brought on the president's troubles had been signed into law by Clinton himself.

Needless to say, the typical *Post* reader, in his way far less blinkered, is likely to know all that.

The *Post* gives its readers something else that *Times* followers don't get: gritty reporting on the street-level realities of metropolitan life. Its columns teem with stories of everyday crime and everyday heartbreak that *Times* mandarins would dismiss as mere sensationalism, vulgar and beneath contempt. But without knowing the human reality, the details of what people are actually doing to one another, who can gauge the city's social health?

In no area is this difference more apparent than in the two papers' treatment of violent crime, especially when committed by minorities. The *Times*, viewing certain kinds of criminality largely as a product of social forces beyond individual control, routinely strains to understand (and



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thereby prompt sympathy for) even the most predatory monsters. An opposite set of understandings relentlessly informs the *Post*'s coverage: that it is not the perpetrators of crime but those whose lives they've shattered who merit our concern; that in the ongoing war for the city's streets between cops and robbers (and murderers, rapists, child abusers, and assorted lesser thugs), it is law enforcement that saves us from mayhem; and that those who smugly sow confusion in the public mind about who are the good guys and who are the bad abet evil.

To understand the distinction I'm pointing to, recall for a moment the notorious 1992 shooting of a young Dominican, Kiko Garcia, by officer Michael O'Keefe, which led to three days of rioting in Washington Heights. Details on the case were fuzzy at first, but community activists vigorously asserted that the victim was a decent young man who'd been shot in the back for the crime (in essence) of being poor and nonwhite. And though the police maintained that, in fact, he was a drug dealer who had died in a struggle for O'Keefe's gun, liberal sympathies instinctively were strongly pro-Garcia and anti-cop. ANOTHER NATIVE SON RETURNS IN COFFIN, ran the *Times*'s mournful headline the day Garcia's body was returned to the Dominican Republic—the bill for the funeral, thanks to David Dinkins, to be footed by the city.

"Mr. Garcia," the *Times* story read, "an illegal alien who came to this country four years ago to be with his family, apparently eked out a living peddling clothing on the street, returning at night to a cramped one-bedroom apartment he shared with his mother, two sisters, two brothers and a niece. Friends and relatives said he was a timid 'big kid' who loved to eat, watch television and have a beer or two with friends."

The *Post*, meanwhile, gave the beleaguered cops the benefit of the doubt from the outset, printing an exclusive on O'Keefe's version of events and reporting in depth on the less lachrymose aspects of Garcia's existence: that he had been "a member of a drug gang known as the End of the Block Boys" and that the building where he died was a known drug location. In the end, this was the version that the facts wholly vindicated, and O'Keefe was exonerated.

Seven years later, in the aftermath of the Amadou Diallo shooting, it was more of the same. The *Times* led the charge to crucify the cops whose gunfire killed the Guinean immigrant, day after day attacking the Street Crime Unit to which they belonged as reckless, ill-trained, and racially insensitive and according vast respect to the Diallo family "advisor," Al Sharpton.

The *Post*, while acknowledging the dimensions of the tragedy, from the first allowed that, far from an execution, the shooting appeared to have been a ghastly accident. "The four cops who gunned down Amadou Diallo in a fusillade of 41 bullets stood ashen," began police reporter Murray Weiss's account of the incident, "stunned and teary-eyed outside Diallo's Wheeler Avenue home that night when their deadly smoke cleared. One cop cried openly on the sidewalk, crouching and rubbing his eyes, just 15 feet from Diallo's lifeless, bullet-riddled body in the vestibule outside his apartment."

Moreover, the *Post* never let its readers lose sight, as the *Times* seemed so eager to, of Reverend Sharpton's long, ugly, often violent history of racial racketeering; noting that in the past few years alone he'd been convicted of defamation in the Tawana Brawley case and been caught on tape preaching words of racial division that seemed to have led directly to the murder of eight people in the massacre and arson at Freddies Fashion Mart in Harlem by one of his followers. Then, too, citing the plummeting morale in the Street Crime Unit—"which recovers about 40 percent of guns seized citywide," among other dramatic successes—the paper made the larger point that the continual, demoralizing assaults on the police loomed as a threat to the safety of the city itself.

The character of a news operation also shows itself in its choice of less weighty stories, even the most incidental items. Take, for instance, the following items that zipped across the wires over the past few months, further documenting the degree to which the P.C. epidemic has gripped the nation's campuses.

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While both items got a fair amount of play, neither saw the light of day in the paper of record. In the *Post*, however, each got full treatment, complete with photo.

• In the interest of highlighting its commitment to diversity, the University of Wisconsin had altered the cover photo on its recruiting brochure, turning a white student into a black one.

• The administration at SUNY Albany, faced with black activists' bizarre claim that the word "picnic" was derived from lynch mobs crying "pick a nigger," had decreed the word could not be used to describe an event honoring Jackie Robinson. Administrators ruled that, while the activists were mistaken, their sensibilities demanded respect. The *Post* writer also reported that, in deference to homosexual students, the school's Affirmative Action Director had further forbidden the use of the word "outing."

This is where having the *Post* around really pays off. Askew as the world often seems these days, indifferent to what were once taken to be common sense and common decency, the brassy tabloid offers daily proof that one isn't crazy—or alone.

Never was that more true than during the Clinton scandals and impeachment saga. While the ostensibly high-minded press gave the president the kind of indulgence that only common interest and shared values can explain, with elite reporters and editorialists more and more brazenly echoing the party lines of "it's only sex" and "let's move on," the *Post*'s outrage at the president's—and the nation's—capacity for cynicism and denial steadily grew. Yes, obviously the paper went after the sex and personal betrayal angles with wanton abandon—this is the *Post* we're talking about—and it also had its fair share of fun with the scandal, much of it at the hands of Sean Delonas, one of New York's most gifted editorial cartoonists. Indeed, Delonas's portrayal of Clinton as a self-serving libertine, wearing nothing but heart-festooned underwear and accompanied by Arkansas chickens who, post-Lewinsky, started appearing with cigars in their beaks, ranks up with Thomas Nast for hilariously savage mockery.

During that tumultuous year, even Page Six, where Delonas appears, jumped into the act, gleefully skewering "portly pepperpot" Monica and carrying on a joyous vendetta against arch-Clinton apologist Alec "Bloviator" Baldwin.

Still, in the most meaningful sense, throughout the long months of Clintonian evasion and spin, the *Post* took the scandal more seriously than most of its more liberal counterparts, never losing sight of the fundamental issues of law at the heart of the crisis, or the vital underlying matters of ethics and character. Leafing through the files I was keeping for a book I was doing at the time dealing in part with Clintonism's impact on the culture, I find more than 100 passionately written and argued pieces clipped from the paper. Indeed, if the good guys eventually prevail to write the story of our time, and Sexgate comes to be considered nearly as sorry a chapter in journalism's history as in America's, arguably only the *Wall Street Journal* will be seen as having brought to those events such visceral outrage as the *Post*.

And just post-election, with the nation's soul again at risk, there was the *Post*, back on the case. The edition my friend read on the plane that day launched a period of journalistic passion that surely equaled that of its most passionate reader. Here, truly, was Clinton's long-sought legacy in full bloom: a contempt for law and tradition never before imaginable on such a scale, and right in the glare of klieg lights! THE HIJACKING OF THE PRESIDENCY, proclaimed the *Post*'s appalled front-page editorial the following morning; and in the days to come, as the Gore legal team and Democratic hand-counters showed themselves to be ever more brazen, the paper's star columnists returned to the theme with renewed intensity. The titles of their pieces tell the story: SMEARING HIS WAY TO A WIN (John Podhoretz); NOT-SO-BLIND JUSTICE IS ON GORE'S SIDE (Rod Dreher); AL'S STOMACH-TURNING PIETY (syndicated columnist Michael Kelly); HOW DOES OUR CREEP VEEP SLEEP AT NIGHT? (Steve Dunleavy); HAS AL NO DECENCY? (Podhoretz again); OH, HOW I WISH THAT I'D NEVER VOTED FOR GORE (Andrea Peyser); GIVE IT UP, AL (Dick Morris); IT'S PURE OPPORTUNISM—CLOAKED IN OUTRAGE (syndicated columnist George

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Urbanities

Will); MEDIA GANG OUT TO SMEAR HARRIS (Page Six gets in on the act); MORE SHAMELESS THAN BILL (Thomas Sowell). And of course, day after day, there was cartoonist Delonas. A typical effort had the President, in his heart-festooned boxers and smoking his cigar, in a golf foursome with O. J., Claus Von Bülow, and freed baby killer Louise Woodward. "Don't worry," he blithely reassures them, "the justice system will sort this election mess out."

Yes, it was utterly partisan; but hardly more so than the broadsheets and broadcast outlets that pretend to neutrality even while savaging Ken Starr or Linda Tripp or, this time around, Katherine Harris.

To be sure, there have been changes in the paper over the years that some of us who read it closely regret. Personally, I very much miss ex-*Times*man Hilton Kramer's scathing weekly critique of the mainstream media and would like to see a lot more of Kelly, Mona Charen, and Paul Greenberg, among other compelling syndicated voices who've largely vanished from the opinion pages in favor of local writers on local themes. What's more, the TV and film reviews were far better when written by A-list social commentators like Podhoretz, Dreher, and Michael Medved; TV writer Linda Stasi and columnist Meredith Berkman are yuppie embarrassments.

Then, again, in the grand scheme of things—in a media universe that accepts as reasonable and fair the direction and tone set by the likes of Pinch Sulzberger and Howell Raines—these are quibbles. What counts is that, with the culture in the balance, we never have an instant's doubt where the *Post*'s heart and mind are.

"The liberalism in this city is so militant," as my friend Dreher puts it, "with the *Times* as its house organ, that for a lot of people the *Post* is more than a newspaper: it's an inspiration. I know that sounds hokey, but I see it all the time in my mail—'Thank God someone's defending religion or the Boy Scouts or the cops. Maybe the world hasn't gone completely mad, after all.'"

A mere 25 cents (50 cents on Sundays): still a helluva bargain for that kind of reassurance. ■

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The Dumbest Immigration Policy

Theodore Dalrymple

The British attitude to immigration and immigrants has always been grudging, a mixture of xenophobia and socialist zero-sum economics. Britons have traditionally regarded the desire of foreigners to come to their shores as more of a threat than a compliment; and because they conceive of a national economy as a cake of predetermined size, they believe that the immigrants' slice must of necessity take the crumbs from their mouths.

In times of unemployment, immigrants are said to take our jobs by undercutting wages; in times of full employment, they are said to take advantage of our generous social security system and thus drive up our taxes. They either work too hard, or not hard enough. They can therefore never arrive at the right moment in the economic cycle; and for this reason, the Hong Kong Chinese were denied British citizenship at the time of the return of the colony to China. Britain viewed the skills, work habits, and capital of the Hong Kong Chinese as a menace rather than an opportunity of unparalleled proportions, the like of which will not soon present itself to any other nation.

Of course, the empirical evidence that refutes the pessimistic, xenophobic, and implicitly socialist attitude to immigration is everywhere visible: indeed, in a certain sense, it has become part of the fabric of everyone's life in Britain. Indian immigrants now own practically every small street-corner grocery in the country, even in the smallest and remotest settlements. There has, of course, been no conspiracy to take over: merely a willingness on the part of the immigrants to work hard and offer a better service than existed before. No Indian shopkeeper would shut his shop while a single customer remained: whereas native British shopkeepers used to delight in closing early, precisely to let their customers know who was boss. The customers could bloody well come back tomorrow if they really wanted anything.

The triumph of the Indian shopkeepers was not altogether surprising in the circumstances, and as a result of it the quality of everyone's life improved slightly. Even the fiercest xenophobe would not willingly forgo Indian corner shops, any more than he would forgo the ubiquitous Indian restaurants that have transformed British eating habits. Surveys show that young people in Britain now consider curry as their national dish.

Many a small business has been the launching pad of the next generation's career in the professions and elsewhere. For example, the parents of the majority of the Indian medical students whom I teach (and Indians make up a quarter of all British medical students) own corner stores, often in dismal provincial towns. In these unromantic establishments, romantic dreams are dreamed.

The most startling of recent immigration success stories was that of the Ugandan Asians, expelled from their African Eden by the sanguinary dictator Idi Amin, a strong believer (along with most development economists of the time) in zero-sum economics. At independence, Britain had given British passports to the Ugandan Asians who wanted them—traders, engineers, petty officials—but it tried hard subsequently to evade its moral responsibilities when Idi Amin threatened the Asians with death if they did not leave. Eventually, if with an ill will, Britain allowed them into the country, and within a handful of years they were thriving mightily. I remember meeting a man who had arrived from Uganda with his family a few years before with the princely sum of $7 in his pocket and who had amassed a $100 million fortune by manufacturing blue jeans. His story was by no means unique.

The mass upward mobility of immigrants in Britain is not a new phenomenon: it has happened many times before. It happened to the Irish, and to an even greater extent it happened to the Jews. Mrs. Thatcher represented a constituency in Parliament that was largely Jewish and extremely prosperous. But the parents or grandparents of almost all her constituents would have been poor immigrants to the East End of London from the Pale of Settlement in Russia, who arrived at the

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turn of the twentieth century to live in conditions of physical poverty and squalor quite unknown today. Herself the daughter of an aspiring small shopkeeper in Lincolnshire, she was well placed to appreciate that birth is not destiny, and that the hope of upward mobility is the engine of economic progress.

In light of such remarkable success, you might suppose that the British would welcome the arrival of enterprising people: but you would be wrong. In Britain, nothing fails like success. And so a curious de facto alliance has emerged between the out-and-out xenophobes and the left-wing liberal intelligentsia that effectively limits immigration and lends plausibility to its bad reputation among the population.

The xenophobes fear that strangers will so swamp the country that the original inhabitants will no longer be able to recognize it as their own. They do not believe in the absorptive capacity of the country to transform people into creative contributors to British culture and traditions. They fear the balkanization of their own land.

This is a possibility, but it is not inevitable. The medical students of Indian origin, for example, are invariably more attached to and deeply versed in traditional British culture than their "native" colleagues, because their parents so desperately wished them to be. Though these students are bilingual, their English is almost always more cultivated than that of their classmates. They are considerably less susceptible to the allure of modern popular culture—which is more of a solvent of traditional culture than immigration could ever be—than are their "more British" fellows. Their parents have sent them to music and drama lessons, and they straddle two cultures with great aplomb. Far from being a threat to British culture, they are the brightest hope of its preservation and development.

The successful cultural negotiation such people accomplish pleases neither the racist xenophobe nor the multiculturalist liberal, who are united in the belief that assimilation is wrong in principle and impossible in practice. The former wants there to be no foreign presence at all; the latter wants to preserve the foreignness of foreigners, thus provoking the very xenophobia he claims to decry and despise.

The multiculturalist liberal believes that all cultures are equal, except for his own, which is uniquely wicked and imperialist. Assimilation, in his view, would be yet another despicable instance of cultural imperialism—but, of course, it would also throw doubt upon his own world outlook, which he has adopted precisely to establish his own superior broad-mindedness and tolerance. After all, my Indian medical students who know Shakespeare and speak what used to be called the King's English might suggest to him that the very people whose culture he claims to defend often see great value in the culture (to say nothing of the institutions) he is defending them from, and that therefore his presuppositions are profoundly mistaken. Keeping foreigners in cultural ghettos is thus a necessity for him, if he is to preserve his self-regard. And it is not difficult to find bureaucratic entrepreneurs in every group (that is to say, the "community leaders") whose personal interests coincide with his own. There are fortunes to be made even in a ghetto.

Of course, if all cultures are equal, migration is itself a mystery, since it occurs (at least *en masse*) in one direction only. To preserve the division of the world into victims and victimizers, therefore, it is intellectually imperative to keep migrants in a state of the most complete dependence possible. And that is precisely what British immigration policy seems designed to do, at least when seen from close up. The last thing liberals need or want is sturdily self-reliant people who do not require their help. A successful but invisible minority, such as the Chinese, is not grist to the mill and provides neither moral sustenance for the outrage of the *bien pensant* nor career opportunities for the professional righters of wrongs. Useful to the economy, the Chinese are useless to careerists.

Self-reliance is not a quality that recommends itself to British immigration officials, either. For example, the law specifically prohibits doctors who come to Britain for further training from seeking to stay permanently in

ALON REININGER/CONTACT PRESS IMAGES/PICTUREQUEST

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The many successes of Britain's immigrants occur despite an immigration policy whose combination of sentimentality and mean-mindedness seems designed to turn potential assets into liabilities.

the country once they have completed their course, even though the nation labors under a national shortage of such trained doctors and has the money available to pay them.

An Egyptian colleague of mine, who became a friend, was granted the standard five-year visa for his training. At the end of this period, he decided that he would like to stay in Britain, and he furnished the immigration department with many well-deserved testimonials both to his professional competence and to his good character. But the immigration department pursued him with pedantic ferocity, until he was obliged to leave and never to return. He went to Australia, and so the country's insufficiency of trained people in his field was exacerbated.

Not long ago, a young woman was admitted to my ward, having taken an overdose. Her reason: her husband was about to be arrested, imprisoned, and deported for being an illegal immigrant.

He was indeed illegally in the country, having arrived from Pakistan seven years previously. A trained electronics engineer, he had soon found himself a job and was now earning some $60,000 a year, on which he paid income tax. A year after his arrival, he had married and now had two children. He had saved money and paid a large deposit on a house. Neither he nor his wife had ever claimed a penny from the state. Apart from his illegal presence, he was a model citizen.

The immigration authorities caught up with him, however. For a time, while his case was considered, he had to report weekly to the local police station. The immigration authorities admitted that, having married a British citizen, he would have a right to reenter the country, but they demanded that he return to Pakistan and apply for such entry, which would take between two and four years (depending, in practice, upon how successfully he bribed the Pakistani officials at the British Embassy in Pakistan). The final rejection of his appeal, which was imminent, would result in his detention prior to deportation.

It surely required but a moment's thought to realize the consequences of this proposed course of action: his wife and children would be at once dependent upon the state, which they had never been before; his children would be deprived of their father at a crucial period of their development; his savings would probably be dissipated; and his

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company would lose the services of a trained engineer. None of this could remotely be construed as being in the national interest.

But the law, it might be argued, is the law: and he had broken it. To allow him to stay would only have encouraged others to follow suit. Fortunately, a letter I wrote to the Home Secretary averted his deportation, but had my personal appeal failed, the man undoubtedly would have been deported as a menace to good order.

It is difficult not to conclude that what particularly offended the authorities about this man was his obvious self-reliance and independence. For the fact is that they deal with most cases of illegal immigration quite differently, provided only that the illegal immigrants accept with perfect passivity the meager generosity of the welfare system, as administered by its vast bureaucracy.

Illegal immigrants are arriving in ever greater numbers in Britain (as the recent death of more than 50 Chinese in a refrigerated container, discovered in Dover, eloquently testifies). It is now the most popular destination in Europe, mainly because the deportation process takes so long that in practice deportation rarely happens.

The immigrants—predominantly from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, but also from Africa—are smuggled into the country in trucks and containers, so many of which arrive every day that effective checking is impossible. Once landed, the immigrants descend from their trucks or containers, walk into the nearest police station, and claim political asylum. Even if they come from countries in which political persecution no longer occurs, the authorities cannot dismiss their claims summarily. Instead, officials distribute them to hostels and cheap lodging houses around the country, where they receive clothes, food, and a small allowance, on strict condition that they do not work. To take paid employment is practically the only thing they can do to ensure summary deportation.

The effect of their enforced dependence is extraordinary. If anyone should doubt the existence of a dependency culture or its power to subvert the human personality, he should visit one of the hotels in which the illegal immigrants are held in iron hoops of induced helplessness.

Several such hotels cluster near the hospital in which I work. They used to house alcoholics—true communitarians, who staggered the collection of their social security among themselves, so that they never had to go a day without cheap but potent cider. The owners of the hotels discovered, however, that illegal immigrants provided a better and easier living: they were less trouble, and you could put more of them into a room.

They sometimes come to my hospital as patients. In many ways, they are remarkable people: young, fit men, they are usually intelligent, often speaking four or five languages, and they have braved very difficult and even dangerous conditions to come to Britain. For an Iraqi Kurd to reach our shores, for example, takes courage and enterprise.

I recently talked to one such Kurd. He had escaped into Turkey and found work in Istanbul, poorly paid because illegal. There he saved the money to pay a smuggler to get him into Britain on a truck, about $2,000 in all. He was clearly not a man lacking in resourcefulness.

He had been in Britain eight months, in one of the hotels near my hospital. Though he spoke Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish, and Greek, he had learned hardly a word of English, and—through an interpreter—I asked him why.

He told me that, in fact, he had attended lessons, laid on free of charge for such as he, but he soon dropped out. Why? The bus fare to the lessons would have taken up much of his allowance money, he replied, and the classes were half an hour's walk away—and sometimes it rained, or was cold, or was windy.

The English weather, it seemed, accomplished in a short time what poison gas attacks, Turkish hostility toward Kurds, and a long clandestine journey had been unable to do: turn him into a passive, helpless human being. But, of course, it wasn't the weather that had done it: it was the months of dependence in the hotel, with nothing to do, but with a basic subsistence provided. And men in precisely his situation have told me many times just what he told me.

In his hotel were people who had vegetated for years in a state

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of suspended animation, quarrelsome and bitter when, as sometimes happened, one of the would-be immigrants suddenly received an apartment, furniture, and a color television for no very obvious reason. Why him and not the others? The workings of the system were entirely capricious and arbitrary.

Capricious and arbitrary as the system might be, it serves several contradictory needs at once. It keeps immigrants invisible and off the job market, where they might arouse the resentment of the xenophobes. It also satisfies the need of liberals to believe that their country provides asylum for the downtrodden and persecuted of the world, though in most cases it is impossible for a British bureaucrat to determine whether a person claiming asylum has been, or is in danger of being, persecuted. The assumption of virtue, however, is more important to the liberal than the performance of good; and he is always more interested in generosity in the abstract than in human reality in its messy details. These advantages aside, the consignment of people to such limbo is a vicious policy that profoundly damages them.

The economic costs to the country are considerable. Not only are people who almost by definition are potential assets turned into actual liabilities, burdening the taxpayer, but perverse incentives are put into place. Recently, I saw a Romanian television program extolling Britain as a suitable place for Romanians to go, precisely because they would be better off there, doing absolutely nothing, than if they remained working in Romania. Life as a Romanian immigrant to Britain was like life under a more abundant form of communism, and without the agitprop: three meals a day and no questions asked or duties to perform.

This extraordinary system, which assiduously deports productive people, turns potentially productive people into drones, and encourages the lazy to arrive, results from a combination of sentimentality and mean-mindedness, a peculiarly British combination.

The sentimentality consists of believing that the purpose of immigration is to provide succor for the persecuted rather than opportunity for the enterprising, and that we can truly do good only when we act against our own interests, or when it costs us something tangible to do so. Not surprisingly, the demand for persecuted people duly produces a supply, since to claim persecution brings advantages, however small they might be. That there is no infallible way to distinguish the genuine cases from the fraudulent ones causes the liberal sentimentalist no particular anxiety: he wants to *feel* generous, not to *be* generous.

The mean-mindedness consists of the dismal, pessimistic view that wealth is static, not dynamic (a view very widespread in Britain), and that immigrants can only consume wealth, not create it. The mean-mindedness also partakes of the fundamentally racist view that immigration is a cultural threat, because culture is passed on through the blood rather than through the mind. As extreme French nationalists have put it, no Jew can ever truly understand Racine, because his ancestors came from Poland or Russia rather than from Gaul.

There is a simple resolution to the dilemmas of immigration: to allow people entry, but to offer them no public help whatever—other than the permission to work—until they have paid taxes for several years. Those who were truly persecuted and in danger of their lives would surely accept the bargain, and British bureaucrats would no longer have to adjudicate the unanswerable question of whether an individual Algerian was tortured by the government, by the Muslim fundamentalists, or by no one at all. Asylum for the truly persecuted would be automatically available.

As for other immigrants, only the enterprising or hard-working would come. Unease about parasites who no sooner arrive than cost the country money would cease; and the lack of public assistance would promote mutual aid among immigrant groups, who would help their compatriots on condition that they deserved it.

Such a policy would, of course, require the abandonment of the sentimental view of people as victims rather than agents and of the socialist view that one man's wealth is another man's poverty. The xenophobe believes people to be a liability; the liberal needs them to be. ■

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Letters

Lincoln Center Revisions

To the editor:

I enjoyed the drawings in your "A New Lincoln Center" (Autumn 2000). As an employee of the Metropolitan Opera House, though, I'm not exactly eager to see anybody act on your plans. What would I do with myself? Still, nice drawings.

One thing surprised me, though: you attributed Marc Chagall's murals to Alexander Calder. Rough day, huh?

James Jordan
Bronx, NY

To the editor:

City Journal's recent article on Lincoln Center dealt primarily with the exterior of Lincoln Center's several buildings. It ignored the more important issue of how well each structure serves its particular performing-arts function.

The Metropolitan Opera House is the acoustical miracle of the world. Its singers' voices can be heard clearly and without amplification from all of its 3,800 seats. Nearly all of the world's other opera houses seat fewer than 2,000. To destroy the Met would be a crime against culture.

The Alice Tully auditorium's acoustics are splendid for mid-size ensembles. The Beaumont building's two theaters are also satisfactory.

By contrast, the New York State Theater, built as a showcase for George Balanchine's New York City Ballet, has horrible acoustics—with or without amplification—and fails to do justice to the New York City Opera company.

BROWN BROTHERS

Notwithstanding revisions by Avery Fisher, Philharmonic Hall's poor acoustics can never be improved sufficiently to correct the terrible mistake of widening the auditorium by six seats. The building should be replaced—not because of its appearance, but because of its acoustics.

Peter Miller
New York, NY

The editor responds:

Mr. Miller is quite right in saying that the Metropolitan Opera House is acoustically superior to Lincoln Center's other, acoustically deplorable, halls; but most music critics, pointing to the unreasonable demands its vastness places on singers, would balk very far short of calling it a treasure.

Kind thanks to Mr. Jordan for the gentle indulgence with which he points out my Calder/Chagall lapse. A beautiful new, classical opera house will harmonize well with his civility.

Are All Vouchers Equal?

To the editor:

I appreciated Howard Husock's excellent "Let's End Housing Vouchers" [Autumn 2000], describing the dreadful failure of our system of public housing vouchers. Husock convincingly suggests that an ideological fixation with naive "free market mechanisms" led conservatives to create a mammoth governmental program that has done little or nothing for the poor while seriously damaging portions of the preexisting private housing market. Yet despite this clear record of failure, the political influence of housing voucher profiteers has prevented this decades-old program from being effectively challenged.

I therefore found it ironic that the same issue contained a Sounding by Sol Stern ["Falling Dominoes"] advocating the rapid establishment of a massive

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system of public school vouchers—the latest of many such *City Journal* pieces. I believe that much of the current conservative enthusiasm for education vouchers rests on exactly the same sort of dangerously fuzzy market analysis so effectively critiqued by Husock with regard to housing, and that the actual establishment of any large-scale educational voucher system (whether or not restricted to low-income students) would inflict exactly the same sort of disaster.

The recent election results indicate that an overwhelming majority of Americans share my concerns. In Michigan, a narrowly focused statewide voucher initiative outspent its union opponents by two to one, but still lost by nearly a 40-point margin—dragging various Republican candidates down to defeat along the way. In California, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur spent nearly $30 million of his own money supporting a very broad voucher initiative, and lost by an even wider margin.

I suspect that if conservative educational reformers invested even a fraction of their voucher time and money in attempting to return our public school system to the educational standards and academic quality of the 1950s and 1960s, they would achieve far greater results. *Ron Unz*

English for the Children
Palo Alto, CA

Sol Stern responds:

It would be ironic for *City Journal* to blast housing vouchers while promoting school vouchers if the two markets were perfectly parallel. Clearly, they're not. Education is a publicly provided right; housing is not. Moreover, there was no "preexisting market" in education—as there was in housing—with which government vouchers would interfere. The idea is to introduce competition, not distort it.

In addition, though Section 8 vouchers set up a perverse incentive, rewarding the dysfunctional and breeding complacent reliance on government, school vouchers reward those who strive to improve their children's life prospects by making the effort to free them from failing public schools.

Finally, there's the difference in outcomes. Federal housing vouchers, as Howard Husock demonstrates, have been a colossal failure, causing harm to poor people and poor communities. The school voucher program in Milwaukee (the only one on which there is reliable evidence) not only benefits 10,000 children who receive the vouchers but has stimulated major reform efforts in the Milwaukee public schools.

If there's anything ironic here it is that Ron Unz cites my article, in which I noted the increasing number of prominent liberals and Democrats who now support small-scale voucher experiments, as an example of an alleged "conservative fixation" with vouchers at the expense of improving the public schools. The majority of my education articles in *City Journal* have not been about vouchers but about what's wrong with the public schools and how to fix them. The broadly based civil rights movement that I am proud to be a part of is for vouchers and for public school reform. We know how to chew gum and walk across the street at the same time, and we welcome Unz's public school reform efforts.

Travelers' Aid?

To the editor:

Peter Reinharz's Sounding, "Why Penn Station Should Stay Put" (Autumn 2000), raises concerns about relocating Penn Station a block west into the James A. Farley Post Office. There's just one problem with his argument: Penn Station isn't going anywhere. It's just being expanded to create a larger, safer, and more efficient complex— like adding a new terminal to an airport—using the existing platforms that even now extend beneath the Farley building.

The core of New Jersey Transit and Long Island Railroad passenger and ticketing operations will remain in the existing—and newly renovated—Penn Station, while the new Farley facility will be the center of passenger operations for Amtrak and airport access. Like the existing West End Concourse that serves LIRR passengers west of Eighth Avenue, the new station will provide almost 40 new stairs, escalators, and elevators, improving access to the western end of the platforms for millions of passengers.

This expansion, championed by Governor George Pataki and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and endorsed by the Municipal Art Society, the Regional Plan Association, and the Surface Transportation Policy Project, will increase the current passenger capacity at the station by approximately 30 percent and

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Letters

double the amount of passenger circulation space in the complex to meet the future's staggering ridership projections.

Converting the landmark Farley Post Office into an intermodal transportation center will meet the new ridership demands with state-of-the-art transportation facilities and mixed-use development that will spur development on Manhattan's long-neglected West Side. The new plan includes flagship facilities for Amtrak, world-class airport access to Kennedy and Newark airports, expanded facilities for commuter railroads, improvements to the Eighth Avenue subway, new postal-service facilities, high-quality retail, commercial, and conference-center spaces—not to mention the preservation and restoration of a historic landmark.

Once the Farley station opens, it will set a new standard for rail travel. America's busiest transportation facility—busier than Newark, Kennedy, and La Guardia combined—should be America's best. And it will be.

John D. T. Gerber
Acting President, Pennsylvania Station Redevelopment Corporation

Peter Reinharz responds:

Yes, the expanded Pennsylvania Station will ensure the "preservation and restoration of a historic landmark" by moving the bulk of station operations one block west. Aside from the Amtrak and airport links housed in the new facility that Mr. Gerber mentions, we can also expect overflow traffic from New Jersey Transit and the LIRR to be shunted to tracks west of Eighth Avenue, a block away from the Seventh Avenue line and another block away from both the BMT and IND lines at Herald Square. Passengers carrying suitcases—or backpacks or briefcases—will have farther to walk to mass transit connections.

The Farley building is beautiful and worth preserving. But the railroads should consider practicality instead of appearance. The expansion should take place at the present site between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, rather than moving west as a means to preserve a historic landmark.

Rather than having state capitalists define the needs for New York's transportation headquarters—they always expect such projects to "spur development," don't they?—the blue-ribbon central planners should ask the travelers with suitcases and backpacks whether they would prefer two in-house subway lines or a grand concourse and a long walk. If ridership increases as much as Gerber projects, lots of folks will be hoofing it. The choice, to this commuter, is eminently clear.

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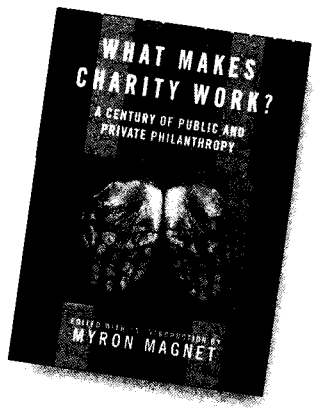

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Our cover painting is a detail from *Late Afternoon, New York, Winter, 1900*, by Frederick Childe Hassam (1859-1935). Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York/ Bridgeman Art Library, New York.

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A Perplexed Guide

Theodore Dalrymple

On a recent visit to New York, I bought *The New York Times Guide to New York City*. I read the following in its prefatory "brief history of New York": "Then in the early 1990s, for reasons still not fully understood, urban America, led by New York City, made a stunning comeback. The city's notorious crime rate dropped by 70 percent, while tourism, job creation and construction hit record highs." Modest agnosticism indeed, from a source not known for it. The *Times* guide refused to advance even tentative reasons for the comeback.

Might the guide's authors have been reluctant to recognize the reasons for New York's renaissance precisely because those reasons offered a powerful refutation of all the social ideas that the *Times* has peddled for three decades? Certainly, the decline in New York's crime rate owes nothing to the *Times*'s own attitude toward crime: a mixture of lordly indifference, pusillanimity, and hostility toward the police, whom it depicts as neo-Nazis scarcely preferable to the criminals themselves, the latter having at least the excuse of being poor, downtrodden, and racially oppressed.

While in New York, therefore, I was surprised at the sensible way in which the *Times*'s London correspondent reported the brutal murder there of a ten-year-old child, a killing that provoked national soul-searching: for London is fast descending into the same vortex from which New York has triumphantly emerged. Crimes of violence are rising as fast as the NASDAQ has fallen—and the *Times* is realistic about the causes, because the problem is 3,000 miles away.

A little boy called Damilola Taylor, who had arrived in London from Nigeria with his mother a month before, was stabbed in the femoral artery on his way home from computer lessons and left to bleed to death in the street by several passersby.

Damilola, by all accounts, was a quiet, studious, and well-behaved boy, who was for that reason mercilessly bullied by his peers. The most likely suspects—to the chagrin of the liberal press—were some youths of West Indian origin, rather than white racists. The case revealed to the wider public for the first time what students of such matters have long known: that relations between West Indians and West Africans in England are not altogether amicable. Ethnic minorities are not one big, happy, family united in the struggle against their overlords.

Astonishingly, the *Times* correspondent quoted a local leader of the West Africans in Peckham, where the murder took place. "Nigerian people are not popular in this area," she said, "because they try to fit in and do well. The West Indian community likes to pretend there is racism everywhere and black people are being held back. Anyone who doesn't subscribe to that point of view suddenly becomes a target."

Such a statement, of course, casts doubt on the entire liberal worldview of oppressed and oppressors, the former requiring a vast bureaucratic apparatus of restitution to rescue them from the latter. It suggests that, on the contrary, it is this very world picture that prevents progress and entraps people in a culture of impotent resentment.

Not long before the murder, a young man of Nigerian origin who became the first black actor to play Hamlet at the National Theatre related how at school his classmates of West Indian origin called him a "coconut" (black on the outside but white on the inside), simply because he tried his best to reach a high academic standard. His classmates regarded his successful efforts as betrayal or treachery rather than as a source of pride or self-respect.

The *Times* correspondent added that Peckham, where the Damilola murder took place, is one of London's most violent areas, and that it is short of police. This suggests that there might be some connection between a lack of proper policing and urban violence, a novel and disturbing thought for those who affect to believe that the poor need protection from the police more than they need the protection of the police.

Perhaps the Damilola case might give the authors of the next *New York Times Guide to New York City* a valuable clue as to why their city's fortunes improved, as well as warn them how that improvement could evaporate: for, as they say in Nigeria, no condition is permanent. What has been done can be undone. ■

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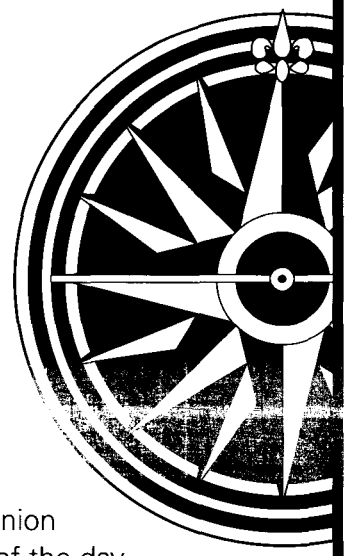

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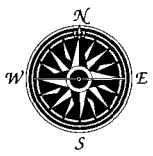

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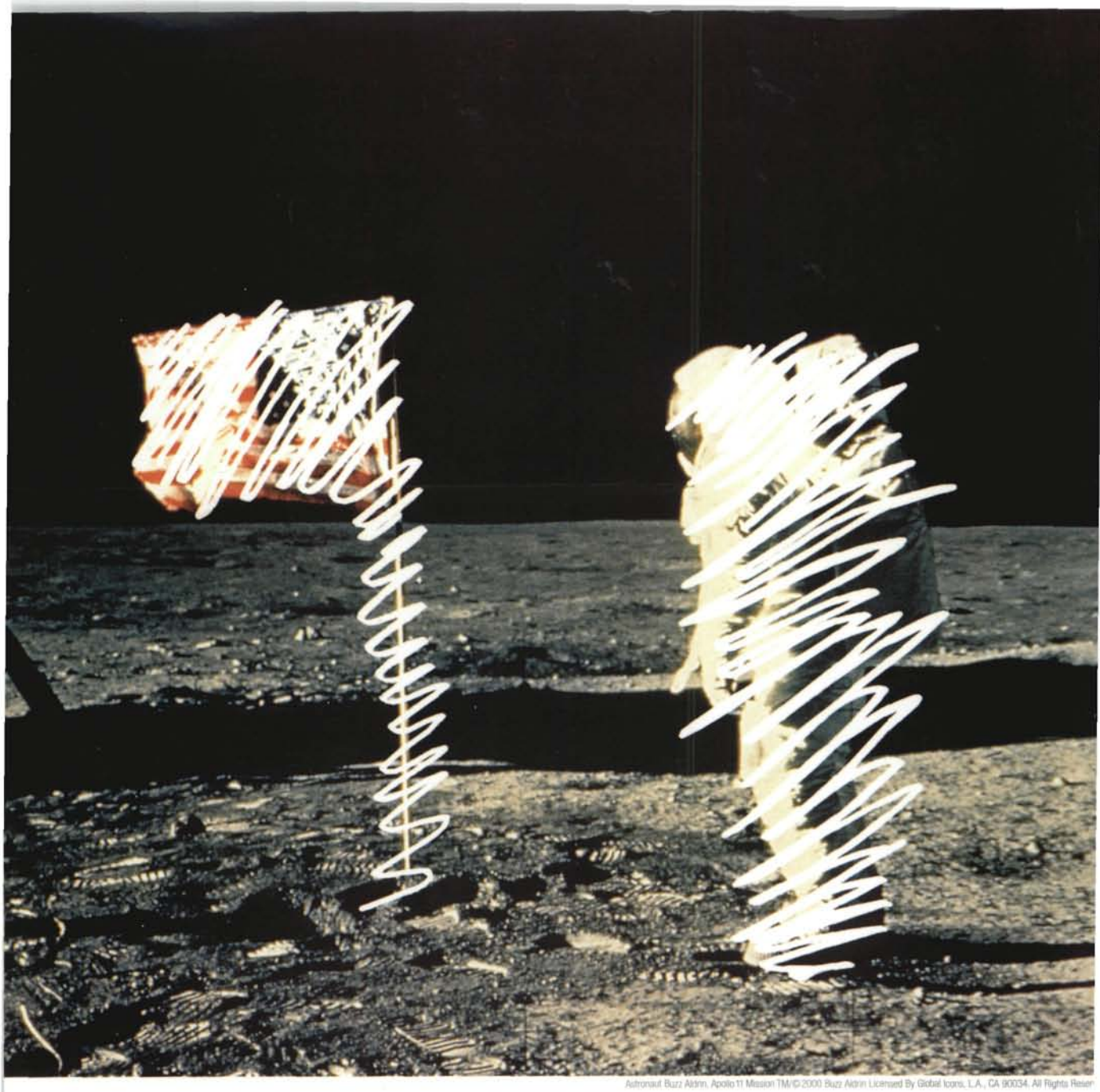

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